

JAMES S. WADSWORTH  
OF  
GENESEO

BREVET MAJOR-GENERAL, U.S.V.

944











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OF GENESEO







*Brigadier General James S. Wadsworth  
Enlarged from a photograph taken at Upton's Hill*

# JAMES S. WADSWORTH OF GENESEO

BREVET MAJOR-GENERAL OF UNITED STATES  
VOLUNTEERS

BY  
HENRY GREENLEAF PEARSON

WITH PORTRAITS AND MAPS



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## PREFACE

THE documentary materials for writing the life of James S. Wadsworth are of the scantiest description. He was always a sparing letter-writer, and although during his service in the army he wrote regularly to members of his family, the letters have almost all, from one cause or another, suffered destruction. The story of his work in the Civil War, therefore—what he did in camp, on the field of battle, as military governor, and in politics—must be traced in the printed records that deal with that time. Abundant as these are, it has often been only after long search that they have yielded up information about an individual who, in filling his proper place in the vast machinery of the army, gave all his thoughts to the duties before him and none to the spreading of them before men.

In view of this meagreness of printed matter bearing on General Wadsworth's career and of such manuscript records as the members of his family have been able to place at my disposal, I have been particularly fortunate in the cordial assistance that has come to me from three surviving members of his staff. Brigadier-General John A. Kress (U. S. A. retired), Colonel Clinton H. Meneely, of Troy, New York, and Major Earl M. Rogers, of Viroqua, Wisconsin, have spared no pains either in giving me such memoranda and recollections as they had or in answering my many questions. Their devotion to the memory of the soldier under whom fifty years ago they

were proud to serve has been one of my chief inspirations. In him these young men of twenty-one beheld an ideal of courage and of patriotism; if any of the brightness of that ideal is shed upon these pages, it is to them that the reader's thanks are due. In age they have not forgotten the vision of their youth.

Colonel W. R. Livermore's recently published "Story of the Civil War" has been of great assistance to me in revising the chapter on Gettysburg and in preparing the maps to illustrate the positions of troops; to Captain Morris Schaff's "Battle of the Wilderness" I am similarly indebted in connection with the chapter on that battle. To the authors themselves I make grateful acknowledgment for the help they have been so ready to give in person on the many difficult military questions with which I have had to deal. I am under especial obligation to the office of the Adjutant-General of the United States Army for permission to consult the records for the purpose of ascertaining the number of troops under General Wadsworth's command at Washington and the strength of the Union forces at Gettysburg on the first day, and in the battle of the Wilderness. Mr. Oswald Garrison Villard has been kind enough to read the military chapters, and I have profited by his helpful suggestions. From Mr. E. B. Adams of Boston, Mr. C. A. Brinley of Philadelphia, and Mr. W. H. Samson of Rochester I have obtained information and valuable documents bearing on the early history of the Wadsworth family. Finally, to my secretary, Mr. Edward L. Viets, I owe much; to my wife I owe more than to any one else.

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JAMES S. WADSWORTH  
OF GENESEO



## CHAPTER I

### THE INHERITANCE

THE life of James S. Wadsworth, of Geneseo, was in a peculiar manner influenced by circumstances of environment and of ancestry. The story of the land-owner and agriculturist who in the mid-decades of the nineteenth century was beloved by tenants and townsmen, of the citizen who publicly championed in western New York the unpopular cause of anti-slavery, of the volunteer soldier who threw himself heart and soul into the war for union and freedom, sacrificing his life on the field of battle,—this story is in its beginnings so inextricably engaged with that of the generation immediately preceding that, to count for its full value, it must be prefaced by introductory exposition and comment more ample than that to which the patience of the reader of biography is usually subjected. On the other hand, this preliminary narrative has the merit of possessing a completeness and interest all its own.

In Durham, Connecticut, a town less than a score of miles northeast of New Haven, there were growing to manhood in the years preceding and during the period of the Revolution three brothers of the name of Wadsworth. Their father, John Noyes Wadsworth, a farmer like most of his neighbors, belonged to one of the ancient families of the colony, his great-grandfather, William Wadsworth (1595?-1675), having been one of the group of one hundred persons who, in 1636, under the lead of the Reverend Thomas Hooker, marched from Cambridge, Massachusetts, through the wilderness to

the Connecticut River and established the settlement of Hartford. From the ten children of William Wadsworth the family had spread widely, and it had become well known. Its male members were soldiers, farmers, lawyers, clergymen, and men of affairs, and, whether the pecuniary status of any individual happened to be fortunate or otherwise, the family name, in a community notably precise in such matters, was one always held in honor.<sup>1</sup>

Among the Wadsworths of Colonial and Revolutionary days, three men, Captain Joseph Wadsworth (1648?–1730?), General James Wadsworth (1730–1817), and Colonel Jeremiah Wadsworth (1743–1804)—names of frequent occurrence in Connecticut annals—illustrate the quality of the family. The first of these is associated with the familiar story of the Charter Oak. When Sir Edmund Andros, royal governor of New England under James II, came to Hartford to demand the charter which was the bulwark of the liberties of Connecticut, his pretext being that the colony had enacted laws contrary to those of England, he found himself confronted in convention by a body of angry and determined men. Suddenly the candles were extinguished, and when, after a prolonged interval of darkness and confusion, they were relit, the charter, which had been lying on the table before the royal governor, had disappeared. It may not have been Captain Joseph Wadsworth who made away with the precious parchment; but his title to the credit of having preserved it in the hollow of a tree which was ever afterward known as the Charter Oak is pretty generally acknowledged, particularly in view of the fact that in 1715 he was voted a sum of money for his safeguarding the charter at a time “when our constitution was struck at.”<sup>2</sup> Again, in 1693, according to Trumbull,<sup>3</sup> when Governor Fletcher,

<sup>1</sup> For the genealogy of the Wadsworth family, see Appendix A.

<sup>2</sup> Colonial Records of Connecticut, V, 507.

<sup>3</sup> History of Connecticut, I, 413.

of New York, having a commission vesting him with power to command the Connecticut militia, came to Hartford to assert his authority, Captain Wadsworth, in command of the train-bands, ordered the drums to beat, intending thus to smother the reading of the governor's proclamation. In a brief, inadvertent interval of silence on the part of the contending parties, Captain Wadsworth, speaking "with great earnestness," gave a final order to his drummers, and then, turning to Governor Fletcher, said: "If I am interrupted again I will make the sun shine through you in a moment." The assurance of the word "interrupted," which may be an embellishment of the narrator's, was sufficiently sublime; but the force of character behind it caused the governor to desist from his efforts and to return to New York with the scope of his command no greater than when he sallied forth.

General James Wadsworth, of Durham, another military member of the family, was a graduate of Yale College, of the class of 1748, his social rank, as given in the catalogue according to the custom of those days, being eleventh in a class of thirty-three. He was pre-eminently the military representative of the family in his generation, having raised a company for the invasion of Canada in 1758 and serving also in the Revolution, his final grade being that of major-general of the Connecticut line. The civil offices which he held were numerous, and his tenure of them, after the good old Connecticut fashion, was long. In the year 1784 he was a member of the Continental Congress. Perhaps his most conspicuous public act was his speech at the State convention assembled in January, 1788, to ratify the proposed Federal Constitution, when he set forth his belief that under the new instrument the tendency toward centralization of power would be irresistible and that in time of stress the rights of the States would go by the board. The authority vested in Congress to lay duties on imports he condemned, asserting that to unite

the power of the purse and the power of the sword is despotic.<sup>1</sup> Though of course he was roundly voted down, he continued steadfast in his conviction. The oath to support the new government never passed his lips, for to him that would be a violation of his fidelity to his State; in short, he clung to the last to that doctrine of States' rights in protest against which, two generations later, the Wadsworth of this biography was to give his life. In 1788 Connecticut was too old and the Union too young for this attitude of the Revolutionary soldier to be treated with anything but respect, of which his appointment by the assembly in 1794 to settle the accounts between Connecticut and New York is sufficient proof.<sup>2</sup> The position of honor which this old soldier held as the "squire" in Durham is quaintly indicated in the reminiscences of the town historian:

I remember, too, that the boys of the Center School often when they saw General Wadsworth coming, on his Narragansett pacer, with his large, erect, military figure, with his broad-brimmed hat, with his Olympian locks, would run across the Green to the road, to take off their hats and make a low bow. This courtesy he returned to each of us, taking his hat quite off, and bowing to each one. Thus he encouraged good manners, of which he was a model.<sup>3</sup>

Unquestionably the most eminent member of the family in the latter decades of the eighteenth century was Jeremiah Wadsworth, of Hartford, a man of great wealth and a true patriot. During the Revolutionary War, when, after the terrible winter at Valley Forge, Major-General Greene undertook the charge of the quartermaster's department, he consented to serve as "commissary-general of purchases."<sup>4</sup> These responsible and

<sup>1</sup> Bancroft's History of the United States, VI, 394.

<sup>2</sup> History of Durham, Connecticut, by William Chauncey Fowler, p. 186.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>4</sup> He was elected to the position by Congress on April 9, 1778, and held it till January 1, 1780.



COLONEL JEREMIAH WADSWORTH.

From a portrait in the possession of Mr. James W. Wadsworth.





arduous duties he discharged in such a way as to win the praise of both Greene<sup>1</sup> and Washington. "I also consider it as an act of justice," wrote the latter to the president of Congress on August 3, 1778, "to speak of the conduct of Colo. Wadsworth, Commissary General. He has been indefatigable in his exertions to provide for the Army, and since his appointment our supplies of provisions have been good and ample."<sup>2</sup> Later in the war Wadsworth performed a similar service for the French army which had come to aid the Americans, and Rochambeau and the other officers of Louis XVI came to hold him in as warm regard as did Washington and Greene; for, besides being a person of force and integrity in public life, he was a man who, wherever he went, made friends. When Washington and Rochambeau met at Hartford in the summer of 1780, Jeremiah Wadsworth was conspicuous among those who made them welcome; and it was under his roof that the two generals discussed the plans for the campaign which they hoped to undertake together. At the close of the war, having gone to Paris to adjust his accounts with the French Government, he was honored by it with one of the gold medals struck to commemorate the restoring of peace between France and England. The effect of dignity, kindliness, and generosity produced by this man of the world was summed up by one of his young Durham kinsmen in a letter to a college friend: "Are you acquainted with his character? If not, take it in short. He can certainly say in many respects to Augustus of old, 'Thou art my brother.'"<sup>3</sup>

It was the writer of this encomium, James, son of John Noyes Wadsworth, who was destined, with his brother William, to be the first to carry the name of Wadsworth

<sup>1</sup>In one of the references to him in Greene's letters, he is described as "fretting his soul out" on account of some of his difficulties in provisioning the army.—(Life of Major-General Greene, by G. W. Greene, II, 167.)

<sup>2</sup>Ford's edition of the Writings of George Washington, VII, 141.

<sup>3</sup>James Wadsworth to Rev. Tillotson Bronson, February 18, 1790.

beyond the borders of New England. Although youngest of the three sons, he was first to receive a college education, graduating from Yale in 1787 at the age of nineteen. His social rank among his classmates is not a matter of record, for the college authorities had abandoned that practice even before the days of democracy; but there is preserved the subject of his commencement "thesis technologica": *magna et numerosa metropolis rei publicæ emolumento non fuerit*. For a year after his graduation, so the story goes, he tried his hand at teaching in Montreal, making the journey thither, it is said, in company with the first John Jacob Astor, a youth of about his own age, who was just beginning his career in America. But the call of the profession of teacher, as well as of the ministry, sounded faint as against the summons of the new age. George Washington had become first President of the United States under the Constitution, and in the prosperity destined to come in the train of peace and stability this young man of twenty-one was resolved to have a share. From the time when his purpose was formed, late in the year 1789, the record of James Wadsworth's life becomes ample and vivid.

Jeremiah Wadsworth, making welcome in his Hartford home this young cousin from Durham, perceived in him, with his ambition, his clear mind, and his tenacious will, what every man of large affairs longs for—a member of the next generation on whose active devotion he may rely, whom he may train up to the knowledge of his interests, and whom he may launch on enterprises that advancing age has the foresight to plan but not the strength to execute. All the more heartily did Jeremiah Wadsworth welcome James because his own son Daniel, though a man of undoubted parts, was unfitted both by health and by temperament for the life of business. What Jeremiah now proposed was that he should furnish money in order that James might purchase land and become a settler in western New York, in a region where he him-

self had already made a considerable investment. Thus, when the resources of the man of means were combined with the youthful energy of the man whose wealth was in his mind and will, and when the field of both was a rich territory just opened to development, there was every prospect that the returns would be substantial and gratifying.

The Phelps and Gorham purchase, in which were the lands that Jeremiah Wadsworth had been induced to buy—probably through one of the chief purchasers, Oliver Phelps, well known to him from their common connection with the commissary department of Washington's army—was a tract of some two and a half million acres constituting the easternmost section of the lands in western New York that belonged to Massachusetts. Roughly speaking, it was bounded on the east by a line running north and south through what is now Geneva, and on the west by an irregular line from ten to fifteen miles west of what is now the city of Rochester. Its southern boundary was the State line, its northern the shore of Lake Ontario. The desirability of this land, particularly on its western margin along the Genesee River, was well known; but since it had only recently come into the market it had but few settlers, who were for the most part scattered along the trail running through Geneva and Canandaigua to Niagara. Jeremiah's own purchase consisted of about twenty-five thousand acres, forming township number six in range seven, which bordered on the Genesee River;<sup>1</sup> with the money that he advanced James Wadsworth bought a portion<sup>2</sup> of number nine, also in range seven, the township known as Big Tree.

<sup>1</sup> Brief of the Titles of Robert Morris to a Tract of Country in the County of Ontario, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> One-twelfth, according to Turner's History of Phelps and Gorham's Purchase, p. 325. Whatever the amount of James Wadsworth's first purchase in Big Tree, on June 15, 1792, he bought of Phelps and Gorham at the rate of a dollar an acre an equal undivided moiety of the township (which was estimated to contain twenty-seven thousand acres), giving four several bonds and mortgages to secure the payment.—(From articles of agreement in possession of James W. Wadsworth.)

To acquire land in the western wilderness at less than a dollar an acre for the purpose of speculation is one thing; to travel to that land for settlement and to remain there in close proximity to the Indians, watching the tide of civilization creep thither by slow approaches, is quite another. For many of the demands of such a venture James Wadsworth was singularly unsuited. All his inclinations and habits of mind and body designated him for the office life of a business man or a lawyer. He had little of the manual facility and zest for practical accomplishment which are indispensable to the frontier settler. The qualities lacking in him, however, abounded in his next older brother,<sup>1</sup> William, whom he persuaded to join him in the undertaking and who proved to be a born leader of pioneers. The partnership of two men whose abilities complemented each other in such perfect fashion was what brought the enterprise to its high level of success.

It was in the spring of 1790 that James and William Wadsworth set out from Durham. The story of their journey and of their settlement at Big Tree, a tale often told by the historians of western New York, may best be given here as it is narrated by Professor James Renwick, of Columbia College.<sup>2</sup>

The brothers hired a small band of hardy axmen in Connecticut, purchased provisions to maintain them until the first crops should ripen, and provided agricultural implements sufficient for their proposed farm. The whole party, with its heavy incumbrances, ascended the Hudson to Albany, then often the voyage of a week; made the long portage through the pines to Schenectady; embarked in bateaux upon the Mohawk . . . and followed its tortuous course until they reached the limit of continuous settlement. Here cattle were purchased

<sup>1</sup> The eldest brother, John Noyes, the father being dead, retained the land in Connecticut.

<sup>2</sup> From his sketch of James Wadsworth in the *Monthly Journal of Agriculture* for October, 1846. Turner, pp. 324-344, gives an excellent account of the Wadsworth brothers and their work.

to serve as the foundation of a future stock and for temporary support, and the party was divided into two bands. James continued the laborious task of threading nameless streams, encumbered by wood-drifts and running in narrow channels, while William undertook the still more difficult duty of driving the stock through the pathless forest. Finally the party was again united upon a small savannah upon the bank of the Genesee. . . . A house having been built by the aid of no other implement than the ax, crops were planted and the cattle turned out to graze in the rich savannah. . . . With the autumn came the enervating and unmanning attacks of the ague. This, to the natives of a country where it was unknown, presented such terrors that the hired men broke the conditions of their engagement and hurried as they best could to the older settlements, leaving the two brothers almost if not quite alone in their log-built cabin. In this position even mere passiveness on the part of their neighbour Big Tree, the chief of the Indian village on the Genesee, immediately opposite to the settlement of the Wadsworths, might have compelled them to follow their servants; but they now obtained from him ready and efficient aid.<sup>1</sup> . . . With the opening of a new spring, a fresh supply of white laborers was obtained, and whether they were acclimatized, or had been familiar-

<sup>1</sup> The friendly relations thus established between the two Wadsworths and the Indians were never broken. It was at their house, in 1797, that what is known as the treaty of Big Tree was negotiated, whereby the Indian title to the lands west of the Genesee was extinguished and Robert Morris was able to accomplish his sale to the Holland Land Company; on this occasion Jeremiah Wadsworth journeyed thither to take part in the proceedings as commissioner for the United States. The homestead, built about 1800 on the high ground east of the river, had bullet-proof walls, but they were fortunately never put to the test. Thither the Indians came on matters of business and for advice; and the stains made upon the wooden floor of the parlor by their moccasins were visible even in the days of James Wadsworth's grandchildren.

An indication of the continued interest of James Wadsworth in the Indians appears in a letter which he addressed to Daniel Webster and which was published in 1838. In this letter he endeavored to show that the reason why they remained in a degraded condition was because they were kept on reservations where they held the land in common, and where they were preyed upon by the surrounding whites. He urged that they be colonized in the West, and that the holding of land in severalty, which he believed was "essential to the civilization of man," be permitted to them.

ized to the endemic disease, no farther interruption occurred in the progress of the clearing.

The duties to be performed were divided between the two brothers. Upon William fell the management of the farm,—a task requiring the utmost diligence and masterfulness, for both labor and materials were scarce. Owing to the remoteness of the region and the high cost of transportation, the raising of stock proved to be the most profitable use to put the land to, for that was a crop which could be conveyed to market on its own feet. In this fashion the rich river pastures were made use of, except, of course, for such land as furnished the produce required by the household. Besides overseeing all this work, “Bill,” as he was always called, had many representative duties which he discharged with gusto. At every house-raising or “logging bee” he was the life of the gathering, and the militia had no more faithful member than he. “General Bill,” mounted on a fine black charger, was a figure to impress vividly the imagination of the youth assembled at the fall musters.<sup>1</sup> “Few men,”

<sup>1</sup> William Wadsworth's devotion to the militia was worthy of a better fate. After twenty years' attendance at drill and muster, he was accepted when the war with England broke out in June, 1812, as major-general commanding the militia of the Genesee district. These troops, stationed together with a small force of regulars along the Niagara frontier, were naturally impatient for action, and on October 13 General Stephen Van Rensselaer essayed to cross the river from Lewiston to drive the British from Queenstown Heights. Successful at first, the small band of Americans, mostly regular troops, had no hope of maintaining itself against the reinforcements which the enemy were about to bring into action from Fort George. At this crisis the militia, falling back on their constitutional privilege of not being bound to serve outside the limits of the State against their will, refused to budge. Wadsworth, who in his impetuosity had already crossed to the other side of the river, and Van Rensselaer, who remained with the militia, were unable to stir them from the vantage-ground whence as spectators they could witness the engagement about to take place. The Americans, under Lieutenant-Colonel Winfield Scott, were hemmed in by a force of British regulars and a band of Indians and forced to surrender. Two days later all the militia and the wounded regulars were returned upon parole. This ended General Bill's participation in the War of 1812. In his one battle he had gained much praise for his soldierly conduct under exceedingly trying circumstances.—(Phelps and Gorham's Purchase, p. 330.)





GENERAL WILLIAM WADSWORTH.

From a portrait in the possession of Major W. A. Wadsworth.





remarks Turner, "were better fitted for a pioneer in the backwoods—to wrestle with the harshest features of pioneer life—or for being merged in habits, social intercourse, and inclinations with the hardy adventurers who were his early contemporaries."<sup>1</sup>

James, on the other hand, who assumed as his share of the work the task of disposing of the lands of which he had charge, soon found that there was little that he could accomplish at Big Tree, or, as it soon came to be called, Geneseo. Purchasers of these lands, whether for speculation or for settlement, must be sought in New York City and in Connecticut, and thither he went repeatedly for that purpose. Indeed, during the period between his arrival at Big Tree in June, 1790, and his departure for England in 1796, he spent at Geneseo, besides the first winter, only the summer months of four years. Through this period, moreover, although speculative purchase of western lands was carried to the edge of peril, the first rush of settlers to the region opened up by the Phelps and Gorham purchase was by no means continued. It was not surprising, therefore, that he accepted eagerly the proposal of several owners of lands in western New York that he should visit England, to negotiate there, if possible, a sale for them.

Although James Wadsworth's stay abroad, which lasted, including Atlantic voyages, from February, 1796, to November, 1798, was financially but moderately successful, it was rich in results affecting his political convictions and personal tastes. That the Europe of 1796-1798 was full of warnings to strengthen an American in his loyalty to the newly founded republic appears from the prospectus of the Geneseo lands which he drew up for the benefit of possible purchasers. From the contrast made therein between existing conditions in the Old World and in the New, it is clear that he regarded the principles embodied in the Constitution of the United

<sup>1</sup> Phelps and Gorham's Purchase, p. 330.

States as the only sure basis of prosperity. The calm and careful reasoning which he addressed to Englishmen about the state of their home investments constituted also his own democratic creed. In all this, of course, he was merely giving cautious expression to the feelings that prevailed on this side of the water in the first half-century of our national existence. His lack of success in England, however, and later the animosities arising from the War of 1812, contributed to intensify rather than to mitigate his anti-British prejudice. In his last years, indeed, this antipathy caused in his family the tragedy of a broken engagement, though after his death the lovers were reunited in strangely romantic fashion.

Thorough-going as was his dislike to some things British, James Wadsworth, by his prolonged stay in England, came to set a value upon other things cherished there. However vigorously he might reject the political institutions of the mother country, he could not utterly escape the consequences of his English ancestry. The country families, with their large estates, quickening the imagination to a grateful sense of the worth of tradition and the beauty of well-ordered living, have cast a spell upon too many a loyal American to call for remark in the case of this young pioneer. Evidently, not merely his imagination but his will was quickened, and for the family which he meant to found in Geneseo he planned a similar setting. At any rate, after his experience in England he was willing to turn his back upon the metropolis of the New World, and to join fortunes with his brother in Geneseo.

For the next four years, however, the status of western lands in the market was such as to require a good deal of anxious attention. Even before his return, letters came from Colonel Jeremiah informing him that things were not going well. In truth, the embarrassments of Robert Morris had produced a crisis that affected more or less disastrously all those who had been speculating

in wild lands throughout the country. It was probably through these business difficulties that James Wadsworth was involved in 1801 in duels with two of the Kane brothers, brothers-in-law of Morris's son Thomas, who had the management of his father's lands. One of the brothers was, James had written to Colonel Jeremiah, "a great rascal," and an insult offered him by another of them was what brought on the encounters on the field of honor.

With the beginning of the nineteenth century affairs in the Genesee Valley began to look brighter. The returns from the labor of ten years, though not large, were substantial and full of promise. The letters written by James Wadsworth to Hartford in these years reveal how surely circumstances were binding him by a thousand ties of interest, loyalty, enthusiasm, and devoted labor to this land of his adoption. "When one first comes out of the woods to this place," he wrote on the occasion of a trip to New York, "the novelty pleases for a few days; but to me a city life very soon becomes insipid and wearisome." In this fashion he maintained in later years his commencement thesis as to the disadvantages of a *magna et numerosa metropolis*.

The strongest tie of all was the last to be knit. These same letters show, with entertaining frankness, how, as he built up the happiness of his life at Geneseo, he continually felt the lack of a helpmate. As the long years of his single life rolled on, the references to this topic shade from gay to grave, and one cannot help surmising, from his increasing criticalness as to womankind, that it was by the narrowest of margins that he failed to remain, like his brother William, a bachelor to the end of his days. The lady who, in his own words, first brought him to "make his bow" with serious purpose was Naomi Wolcott, daughter of Samuel Wolcott, of East Windsor, Connecticut, and cousin of Oliver Wolcott, who had been Secretary of the Treasury in Washington's cabinet. They

were married on October 1, 1804, he being thirty-six and she twenty-seven years of age. Five children were born to them, of whom James S. Wadsworth was the second child and the eldest son.

A man like James Wadsworth, who, tenacious of purpose, planned in terms of decades and lavished on his plans minute attention to detail, had, perhaps, a right to count upon success. Though the first fruits of reward in the early years of the century were cut short by the period of depression caused by the troubles that culminated in the War of 1812, at length, when peace was established, the quarter of a century of preparation began to receive its adequate reward. With another decade, in 1825, what had been from the first the greatest obstacle of all to the development of western New York—lack of cheap transportation—was overcome by the opening of the Erie Canal. Genesee wheat could then be profitably raised for the Eastern market, and from that time on every part of the region had a share of well-earned fame and prosperity.

In these days of affluence, when men like the Wadsworth brothers, who had ventured much and labored longest and hardest, naturally fared best, the fact that they adopted the principle of using their surplus profits in the purchase of more land in the Genesee region is highly significant. At a period in America when manufactures and commerce, offering returns both immediate and glittering, were absorbing capital rapidly, they preferred the slow and moderate profits obtainable from ownership of the soil. So extensive, indeed, were James Wadsworth's purchases that he could ride, it was said, from Genesee to Rochester, a distance of twenty-eight miles, on his own land.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> He also purchased land in Ohio and Michigan. Among the deeds of the estate is one dated September 20, 1788, of a tract in Michigan sixty miles long and twelve miles wide on the north side of the river à la Franche, a "free and voluntary gift of the principal chiefs and leaders of the Chipe-way nation of Indians at Detroit," to Jonathan Schieffelin, lieutenant of



to of our of Great Britain - Detroit the Twentieth day of September  
 Corlaen France & Ireland Illinois & Canada of the North Sea



Michigan



Michigan



and that we affix a heron. Le College and can further De  
 of which having on the Twentieth day of September, in the year  
 of Chief and Council of the Chippewa Nation of Indians at Detroit  
 by these presents, that the said Principal Chief and Council, we  
 and granted as aforesaid, and that the extent and quantity was  
 we heron to sign our names, and affix our Seal, on the 20th  
 of Great Britain France Ireland Sea &c. and in the year of

Resisted in the spirit, &c. &c.

1. *Accipiter*  
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 25. *Accipiter*

John son of William, in the thirty eight year of the King  
 Edward the Thirdward. Born June 24 Eight Eight.

Hugh Johnson





The explanation of his freedom from the American passion for haste at all hazards lies in the distinctive ideal that he cherished—an ideal of which the groups of trees that he left standing in his pastures told the story. In this country, as an English traveller in the 'forties complained, "people seldom ever seem really to get near a tree except to cut it down."<sup>1</sup> According to the tradition and prejudice of backwoodsmen, the shade ruined the grass, whether for hay or for grazing. But James Wadsworth, with the recollection of English parks that had delighted his eye, was not at all moved by such considerations. The result proved that the harm predicted was wholly imaginary. The benefit of occasional shade for the cattle was most desirable, while the effect of beauty has given the Genesee Valley the happy distinction of providing the traveller's memory with an unforgettable picture.

In working out this ideal of a large estate, however, James Wadsworth's common sense and democratic faith never allowed him to lose sight of the need of adapting his aims to American conditions. The system of leases evolved in the course of years for the lands worked by tenants is only one out of a dozen instances that might be cited to exemplify this fact. The leases, which had at first been drawn for life tenure, were gradually shortened, until finally the general practice came to be to draw them for only a year. This arrangement did not mean that the farms changed hands frequently; on the contrary, any change in the tenants was very rare.<sup>2</sup>

volunteers. The signatures of nine white men testify that "the said principal chiefs and leaders were perfectly sober at the time of signing and delivery of said deeds and writings for the said tract of land, granted as aforesaid, and that the extent and quantity was fully explained in our presence." That portion of the deed containing the signatures of the Indians is here reproduced.

<sup>1</sup> Lord Morpeth's MS. journal of his travels in North America in 1840-41. Pierce-Sumner Collection, Harvard College Library.

<sup>2</sup> Not a few of the farms are at the present time occupied by descendants of the early tenants.

For them, the result of the short-term system was, according to Professor Renwick, that they "were upon the whole more successful in their pursuits, enjoyed a greater share of comfort, and laid by larger profits than those who purchased upon credit lands of equal quality in the neighborhood."<sup>1</sup> For the owner the advantage was that in the matter of improvements, rotation of crops, and so on, he kept the control of his property in his own hands, and also ran no risk of the "anti-rent" disturbances that troubled the owners of the large estates in the Hudson River counties where long-term leases prevailed.

What thorough attention the leased farms required—and received—from James Wadsworth is apparent from his instructions to the farm agent, whom he directed to make inquiries as follows:

Are the gates in good order? Is the wood-pile where it ought to be? Are the grounds around the house kept in a neat and wholesome manner? Are the sheds and yard fence around the barn in a good state of repair? The land agent should make suggestions to the tenants on the leading principles of good husbandry, with frequent references to sound morals, founded on the sanction of religion and just reasoning; and also the unappreciable importance of the education of youth and of a vigilant attention to the state of common schools in the lessees' district. Shade trees must be about each house. From a look or two about the garden or house, you can easily ascertain if the occupant drinks bitters in the morning or whiskey with his dinner. If he drinks bitters, you will find his garden full of weeds.<sup>2</sup>

The result achieved by James Wadsworth as the product of a lifetime of labor was unique, and the reason is apparent when one considers what, according to English and to American criticism respectively, were its weak

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Agriculture*, October, 1848, p. 151. For further quotations from Professor Renwick's article, see Appendix B.

<sup>2</sup> Turner, Phelps and Gorham's Purchase, p. 341.

points. To the Englishman, James Wadsworth's profits seemed large, but still not sufficiently generous to compensate for the fact that the possession of the land, besides requiring much hard work of its owner, gave "no political and little social influence," when "by lending his money and doing nothing a man can obtain seven per cent certain."<sup>1</sup> To the American, whose magnet was the even more remunerative industries centring in a *magna et numerosa metropolis*, the life of a "farmer" was as repugnant as its gains seemed inconsiderable. To the owner himself each of these opposing objections was but stronger motive for taking satisfaction in the work of his own hands and brain.

Unique his achievement was, and complete also. Nothing conveys the sense of well-rounded attainment better than the picture of him at Geneseo in 1834, as drawn by another English traveller:

Fortune seemed not yet wearied of being bountiful, and allowed us to see this most beautiful valley, with the advantage of residing in one of the most hospitable and agreeable houses that I ever entered. Mr. W——'s son accompanied us through his extensive farms, which are formed to delight equally the eye of a Poussin or a Sir J. Sinclair. The broad meadows of an alluvial soil, covered with the richest grasses, as watered by the winding Genesee, are studded with trees beautifully and negligently grouped, among which are scattered large herds of cattle of various breeds and kinds, both English and American; the meadows are here and there interspersed with fields of Indian-corn and wheat, while the hills that rise on each side are crowned with timber, excepting spots where the encroaching hand of improvement has begun to girdle some of the tall sons of the forest, whose scathed tops and black, bare arms, betokening their approaching fall, give a picturesque variety to the scene.

Yet this scene, extraordinary and interesting as it was, possessed less interest to a contemplative and mus-

<sup>1</sup> Notes on North America, by Professor J. F. W. Johnston, I, 206. See Appendix C.

ing mind than the venerable and excellent gentleman who had almost *created* it; for it was now 44 years since Mr. W—— came as the first settler to this spot, with an axe on his shoulder, and slept the first night under a tree. After this he lodged in a log-house, subsequently in a cottage; and he is now the universally esteemed and respected possessor of a demesne which many of the proudest nobility of Europe might look upon with envy, where he exercises the rites of hospitality in the midst of his amiable family with a sincerity and kindness that I shall not easily forget.<sup>1</sup>

This effect of completeness, it should be remembered, however, was attained by years of labor in other fields besides those of land. Just as the pioneer farmer's venture was what he could raise on his hundred-acre lot, so James Wadsworth's venture was the social welfare of the entire Genesee tract. His responsibility toward the region had from the first, and in the most natural manner possible, quickened in him the community sense. Whatever may have been the case in the early Puritan commonwealths, the pioneers of the first years of the nineteenth century who went forth to settle western New York were pioneers also of the age which imagined that it was approximating complete democracy in endeavoring to approximate complete individualism. With a social sense developed only enough to provide the few necessary measures for common protection and preservation, they looked askance at suggestions intended to bring about among them greater coherence. To James Wadsworth the situation in Genesee was typified, as he used to indicate to his guests, by the contrast between the spires of four rival churches visible from his windows and the one school-house, which, as he bade them note, was in such condition that a good farmer would consider it unfit to keep swine in. What stock of surplus energy his neighbors possessed was, he felt, not

<sup>1</sup> Travels in North America during the Years 1834-5-6, by the Hon. C. A. Murray, I, 80, 81.

turned to strengthen the community either for that generation or the next, but was exploited on the motives of individual salvation and sectarian rivalry. To train that which was a community only in name to a sense of this lack in itself became the object of his philanthropic labors in the later years of his life.

From the time when he first entertained the idea of settling in western New York his plans for the development of the region had included an "academy" or some similar institution of higher learning. The long season of winter leisure, which country dwellers are so prone to waste, he devoted to hard study and reflection concerning the changes that were beginning to take place in the body of accepted knowledge, and the ways in which the benefit of the advances of science might be brought immediately to the population whose welfare he had at heart. In 1827 he was successful in establishing in Geneseo a high-school "sufficiently extensive to teach six hundred scholars, particularly in the higher branches of science." Though in those early days he could find no one better equipped to teach these subjects than three youths, Cornelius C. Felton, Henry R. Cleveland, and Seth Sweetser, fresh from the classical curriculum at Harvard, he held fast to his original purpose and never failed to proclaim his faith. "It will be no injury to a mason," he wrote, "to become acquainted with the properties of air, nor to a millwright with the properties of fluids, and, I add, to the mighty mass of mind throughout the State to reason correctly." And again: "The man who is scientifically instructed is a double man, whether he acts in General Scott's regiments on the lines, or in a workshop, or on a farm, or in the cabinet at Washington."<sup>1</sup> Admirable illustrations, these, that it is the clear thinker living close to realities who is the first to catch the spirit of the age to come.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *American Journal of Education*, 1858, pp. 396, 397.

<sup>2</sup> The practical and persistent effort which James Wadsworth gave to the cause of public education in New York is set forth in detail in an article in

Although time and money without stint were expended by James Wadsworth in this chosen work of his for the public welfare, he kept himself through it all very much in the background. In the same fashion, too, he avoided the publicity of politics. To a certain extent he was active behind the scenes, particularly with William H. Seward and Thurlow Weed, at the time of the "anti-masonry" excitement in 1827-1828; but neither as Federalist nor as Whig would he consent to stand before the people as a candidate for office.

No man ever saw with clearer eye than James Wadsworth what opportunity had to offer him, or ever with firmer will made it render up to him the uttermost of his desires. Fortunately, the material that he wrought in—the land—has this benefaction for its owner, when, as in this case, he dwells upon it and cultivates it with free labor: because of its imposing permanence, because it is the home as well as the means of livelihood of those dependent upon it, it will not suffer its temporary possessor to ravage it for a few years' profit. Subtly it works through his imagination upon every purpose, so that his thought of it gradually comes to concern as much what he shall give as what he shall get. The certainty that

the *American Journal of Education* for 1858, pp. 389-406. In substance it is a story of attempts through legislative action to arouse the several town governments to their duty to keep fresh the springs of democracy for the next generation. Slow work it was, for the reasons already given; but mere slowness was not discouragement to a man of his long-range endeavor. Hall's *Lectures on School Keeping*, and *The School and the Schoolmaster*, by Alonzo Potter and George B. Emerson, were books in the preparation and distribution of which he was actively concerned. Of the latter of these books his son-in-law, Martin Brimmer, mayor of Boston in 1843, distributed three thousand five hundred copies among the public schools and school committees of Massachusetts. Another work, an essay on *Town Organization: Its Uses and Advantages*, by Robert A. Coffin, was the result of a prize offered by James Wadsworth. To him also the system of district-school libraries owes its existence. Copies of important school reports—particularly of work done in Massachusetts—and of educational articles of note in newspapers and magazines he procured in large numbers and distributed widely. Finally, the library in Geneseo, known as the Wadsworth Athenæum, was endowed by him.



JAMES WADSWORTH.

From a portrait in the possession of Major W. A. Wadsworth.





in the end his children will possess this domain is the final incentive to its master to make it in every sense a fair inheritance. Thus for James Wadsworth's recognition of responsibility as the mate of opportunity not only his family but the whole region of western New York had reason to be grateful.

With this endowment of ancestry, with this environment, what would his eldest son make of life?

## CHAPTER II

### BEFORE THE CALL

#### I

##### PRIVATE LIFE

JAMES SAMUEL, the second of the five children of James and Naomi Wadsworth and the eldest son, was born on October 30, 1807.<sup>1</sup> His childhood and youth were passed, it is hardly necessary to say, in happy circumstances; but of traits or deeds associated with these early years little is known except that he was quick and strong of body, bold and ardent in character, and full of high spirits.

In his early education what was imparted to him from books probably counted for less than the varied life which centred in his home. At all events, his college career shows that he had no faculty, innate or acquired, for systematic hard study, and no motive either of interest or compulsion for addressing himself to the dry, classical routine of what then constituted the curriculum at Harvard. He was a member of the class of 1828 during its junior and senior years, but he did not receive a degree. Older than most of the members of his class, he possessed a broader experience of life, and this fact undoubtedly made it easier for him to undervalue the studies that they were pursuing. Then, too, although he had not inherited his father's keen mind and gift for the persistent pursuit of detail, he unquestionably had imbibed some of his contempt for the old-fashioned educational methods of colleges. However that may be, as concerns

<sup>1</sup> Harriet was born in 1805; William Wolcott, Cornelia, and Elizabeth in 1810, 1812, and 1815, respectively.



JAMES S. WADSWORTH.

From a water-color sketch in the possession of Mrs. Charles F. Wadsworth.



learning in these years, James S. Wadsworth seems to have come out at the same door wherein he went.

Friends he had in plenty, and they were men worth knowing. Among them were the three young fellows of the class above his, who, immediately after their graduation, went to Geneseo to be the first teachers in the new academy founded by his father. And with Felton and Cleveland was to be reckoned another member of the "Five of Clubs," Charles Sumner. John Lothrop Motley, a freshman of thirteen, admired the "dashing, handsome young man," seven years his senior, but did not know him.

Wadsworth's legal education was as unsystematic as his college studies had been. A season of "reading law" in the office of Daniel Webster was followed by a year, or part of a year, 1829-1830, at the Yale Law School, and this by study in the office of McKean and Denniston at Albany. Such training was highly important for a man destined for the kind of work that was before Wadsworth; and it was to this end, rather than with the intention of practising, that he pursued his studies till he was admitted to the bar in 1833.

In truth, by this time there was need of him at Geneseo. In the month of March, 1831, his mother and his nineteen-year-old sister Cornelia had died; in this year, 1833, his uncle, "General Bill," and his oldest sister Harriet had followed.<sup>1</sup> The duty of the eldest son was to bring strength and comfort to the three remaining members of the family, and to acquire an understanding of the way in which the property was managed. His father had inherited General Bill's lands and at sixty-five had reached an age to feel the need of training younger shoulders to bear his burden.

The final motive to hold young James Wadsworth to Geneseo was added when, on May 11, 1834, he was married to Mary Craig Wharton, daughter of a well-known

<sup>1</sup> Harriet in 1829 had married Martin Brimmer (1793-1847), of Boston.

family of Quaker merchants in Philadelphia.<sup>1</sup> At the time of her marriage she was not quite twenty, "the most beautiful woman in the country," as Motley wrote, in the language of enthusiastic reminiscence, "and as agreeable and accomplished as beautiful."<sup>2</sup>

Desirable as was the elder son's presence at Geneseo, his father had no mind to restrain him and his bride from making an extended trip abroad. Provided with letters of introduction and with an even better passport in the fame of Mrs. Wadsworth's beauty, the young couple pursued a brilliant and happy course through France and England. In Paris, there were those who welcomed them for the sake of the old friendship of Lafayette, Rochambeau, and their brother officers for Colonel Jeremiah Wadsworth. In England, too, they were received with great cordiality. As the result of an acquaintance with Lord Palmerston, the young American farmer was successful in arranging for a number of lads from his estate on the west coast of Ireland to come to the Genesee Valley as laborers; furthermore, in their search for a house the style of which pleased them, the Wadsworths chose Lord Hertford's villa in Regent's Park, and before they sailed for home were able to procure plans of it, from which they proposed to build a replica in Geneseo.

As soon as possible after their return, work was begun upon the house, which, situated in ample grounds at the opposite end of the village from the homestead, commanded to the west the same wide view over the valley, with its pastures studded with groups of oaks and elms. In this autumn of 1835, Charles Frederick, the first of their six children, was born.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Her father, John Wharton, was the grandson of Joseph Wharton (1707-1776), the owner of Walnut Grove, where in May, 1778, took place the brilliant fête, known as the Meschianza, which was given to Sir William Howe before his departure for England.

<sup>2</sup> J. L. Motley and His Family, *Further Letters*, p. 207.

<sup>3</sup> The others were Cornelia, Craig Wharton, Nancy Wharton, James Wolcott, Elizabeth. Craig died in 1872, Charles in 1899.



*Mrs James F Hudsoworth*  
*From the painting by Sully in the possession of Mrs Charles F Hudsoworth*





Among the young people in the two households there was naturally, in these peaceful years, much merriment, watched over, as from afar, by the single surviving member of the elder generation, and it is not strange that young James's fondness for a jest at the expense of his father was frequently exercised. On one occasion, conspiring with his wife and his sister, he dressed the young Charles Frederick, aged three, in the uniform in miniature of a British soldier and then sent the child alone into the room where his grandfather was sitting. The immediate explosion of wrath gratified all the expectations of the mischief-makers; the old gentleman rushed out to hurl at them the words: "Would you make a harlequin of your boy?" At another time the elder Wadsworth, walking on Broadway with his son and Thurlow Weed, met the man with whom thirty years before he had exchanged shots on the field of honor. The other bowed, but he made no sign. "Don't you know Mr. Kane?" asked his son, and received the brief answer: "I met him once." "Supposing," writes Thurlow Weed, "that James had not heard of the duel, when we were alone I mentioned it to him, to which he replied, laughing, 'I know all about that, but I wanted to draw the governor out.'"<sup>1</sup> Anecdotes as slight as these do not survive in any convincing number for seventy or eighty years, but the fact of a strong love of fun in the younger Wadsworth is testified to by a tradition shared amongst innumerable friends and visitors.

From the earliest days of Big Tree the Wadsworths had been famed for their hospitality. The Frenchman or Englishman on his way to Niagara Falls was almost certain to appear at the door of the homestead with a letter of introduction, and relatives and friends from Hartford, Boston, New York, and Philadelphia were constantly coming and going. Moreover, in a household that con-

<sup>1</sup> Autobiography, p. 153. Weed, as editor of the *Rochester Telegraph*, had in 1823 made the acquaintance of James Wadsworth, and always spoke of him warmly as a "friend and patron."

tained a nature so gay and sweet as Elizabeth Wadsworth, it was not strange that young bachelors should find attraction; and men like Charles Sumner and "Prince John," the brilliant and handsome son of President Van Buren, were not infrequently to be found there.

Among English visitors, mention must be made of Lord Morpeth, the friend of Charles Sumner and a descendant of that Earl of Carlisle who, in 1778, had come from England with vain offers of peace. He found as Wadsworth's tenants three Yorkshiresmen from his own neighborhood, one of whom told him that James Wadsworth was "the finest nobleman in the country."<sup>1</sup> But of all the travellers from over-seas, Charles Murray is the most noteworthy, for he it was who was destined to win Elizabeth Wadsworth's heart. The story of their love is a moving page in the family history.

Charles Augustus Murray, second son of the Earl of Dunmore, was an Englishman of unusual personal charm and exceptional ability. Famous at Oxford for his feat of riding in one day to London and back, a distance of one hundred and twenty miles, he also displayed marked literary tastes and was a frequent guest at Samuel Rogers's breakfast-table. His fondness for the active life of travel brought him to America, and in 1834, when he was twenty-eight years old, he appeared at Geneseo, accompanied by his friend, Andrew Buchanan, then British attaché at Washington. No prolonged visit was needed for either Charles Murray or Elizabeth Wadsworth to discover the rare qualities of mind and character which the other possessed, or for a strong affection to grow up between them and to be avowed. James Wadsworth, however, refused his consent to their engagement, and Murray, pursuing his original plan, continued his journey to the West. He joined a tribe of wandering Pawnees, with whom he lived for a number of months, experiencing adventures the narrative of which forms an interesting part of his *Travels*

<sup>1</sup> *Travels in America*, p. 24.



*Elizabeth Wadsworth*  
*Sister of General Wadsworth From a painting by Colly*



in North America. Returning to Geneseo at the end of a year or more, he renewed his suit. James Wadsworth now relented, but his willingness to put his daughter's happiness first was not of long duration. After a few months he insisted that the engagement should be broken off, giving as a reason that he could not allow his daughter to live so far away. The girl, who was not yet twenty-one, yielded, as many another before her had yielded, to the old man's iron will, and Charles Murray went back to England.

Eight years later, in 1844, James Wadsworth died, being seventy-six years of age. When the news of his death reached England, Murray wrote at once to Elizabeth Wadsworth urging that, as her service of filial devotion was now ended, there could be no obstacle to their marriage. Though her deep affection for him had never altered, her over-sensitive nature and an exaggerated feeling that her youth had gone—she was only twenty-eight, but her hair had begun to turn gray—made her fear that the offer was now prompted by chivalry alone, and she refused him. Six years afterward she was travelling in England with her friends, the Duncans. At a crowded junction where the train in which they were journeying to Scotland was stopping, the carriage occupied by her party was unexpectedly entered by Charles Murray. Within a week after the meeting thus brought about by a caprice of fate—once, at least, bent upon an errand of mercy—the engagement of the reunited lovers was announced; in a short space of time the marriage took place, her brother James coming from America to give her away. The Murrays went almost immediately to Cairo, where he had been consul-general for some years. A year later Elizabeth Murray died, leaving an infant a few days old. Among the thousand love tragedies of the world, few are at the same time so simple and so poignant as this one.

Not long after this blow, another fell in the death of William Wadsworth. After a few years of married life, the latter part of which was clouded by ill health, he died

in 1852, leaving to his brother's care a widow<sup>1</sup> and three small boys. Thus, at the age of forty-five, James S. Wadsworth was left without brother or sister, and through the death of his brother-in-law and co-executor, Martin Brimmer, the entire management of the property fell to him. Included in this duty was that of attending to the inheritance of his brother's children and of his nephews, Martin Brimmer, Jr., and Charles James Murray. The latter, having an English father, was debarred by the laws of New York from inheriting the land owned by his mother; but Wadsworth, in order that the little alien might suffer no ultimate loss, procured with considerable difficulty the enactment of a special law by which the land in question was held in trust until the boy should come of age and decide for himself whether he should remain a British subject or become a citizen of the United States. In a thousand affairs, ranging from such a matter as this to the minutest detail of crops and leases, in all of which Wadsworth must decide, and decide right, there was enough to charge every minute of the day with activity. "He is," wrote Murray's naval brother, "the nearest thing to perpetual motion I ever saw . . . and he has more 'irons in the fire' than there were bayonet points before Sevastopol."<sup>2</sup>

Busy as he was, no man ever fitted himself to his responsibilities with less friction. The father's passion for organization and thoroughness, together with his perception of the necessity that his subordinates should be men of no less than first-rate ability, had already created a machine perfectly adapted to the work in hand; what was required from the son was the direction of the machine from day to day.<sup>3</sup>

But in the wealth of James S. Wadsworth's inheri-

<sup>1</sup> He married Emmeline Austin, of Boston, sister of the late Edward Austin. His two sons who grew to manhood are William Austin Wadsworth and Herbert Wadsworth.

<sup>2</sup> *Lands of the Slave and the Free*, by Capt. the Hon. Henry A. Murray, R. N., p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix C. The Wadsworth Estate in 1850.

tance there was more than this. Not only the way of life fashioned by his father but also the convictions on which it was based he accepted implicitly. Neither the younger man's abundance of means nor the personal gift of leadership that soon began to manifest itself in him ever brought him to betray the sincere creed of democracy in the light of which the elder Wadsworth had lived and worked. The contrast in outward circumstances between the early life of father and of son may easily be made too much of; the point to remember is the continuity from one generation to the next of those convictions that count for far more than money.

More genial and more ardent than his father, the younger Wadsworth, having lacked the discipline of making a fortune grow by constant calculation of profit and loss, was also less precise in the spending of it. Indeed, his impulse to give was almost incorrigible. How ready he was to respond to a call upon him appeared on a large scale at the time of the Irish famine of 1847. In the movement in Boston and New York to send relief Wadsworth was quick to join, and his contribution of grain filled one of the ships sent from New York to Ireland. Again, some eight or ten years later, when he owned a house in New York,<sup>1</sup> it was his practice, on coming to the city each autumn, to call at the office of one of the most effective benevolent societies, and to leave with its secretary a check for three or five thousand dollars. His charity, as the narrator of the incident justly remarks, "formed as much a part of his system of life as business itself."<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, a succession of prosperous years, culminating in a season when wheat sold at the high price of three dollars a bushel, gave to his ability to spend freely a perceptible stimulus. It was the needs of his growing household that were chiefly responsible for the addition

<sup>1</sup> On Sixteenth Street, between Fifth Avenue and Broadway.

<sup>2</sup> See the editorial entitled "A Country Gentleman of the Free States," in the *New York Evening Post*, September 27, 1864.



of an upper story to the house at Geneseo—an alteration by which its resemblance to Lord Hertford's villa was considerably modified; but the plan of taking his whole family abroad for an extended stay was one which few American fathers of that day would have had either the means or the inclination to put into effect. Some reminiscences written by the eldest daughter give interesting glimpses of the trip.

We first went to Paris, where we met my eldest brother, Charles, just returned from Egypt and studying at the École des Mines in the Quartier Latin. A short time after we arrived Charles developed small pox and gave it to my father, who was very ill at the Hotel Meurice for weeks. He was obliged to take the whole wing of the hotel in which our rooms were, as all the other people went away for fear of infection, though he was so well isolated that not one of the rest of us took it.

When he got well we went to the South of France, travelling for the most part in a large carriage,—a *berline*, it was called. It was a second-hand one which my father had commissioned the courier to buy for him, and he was much dismayed, when it met us at Tours, to find that a huge coat of arms in brilliant colors, surmounted by a coronet, still decorated the panels. We were obliged to stay at Tours till this could be painted out and my father's republican spirit appeased!

We travelled with four horses and postillions, a new and most delightful experience to all of us young people. In this way we went through Southern France, stopped at many places of interest, and came in June to Switzerland, where we spent the summer at the "Trois Couronnes" at Vevey. My father was obliged to go to Geneseo for several months, but he came back to us in the autumn, when we crossed the Alps, and stayed all that winter in Italy, a rather diminished party, as my sister Nancy and my brother James were left at school in Vevey.

The following May we all (with the exception of Charles, who remained in Paris), went to England, as my father was anxious to visit the spot where his sister was buried, and to see the child in giving birth to whom she had died.





RESIDENCE OF JAMES S. WADSWORTH, GENESEO.



Enriched by the memory of many adventures, and with the bond that held them together strengthened, as is always the case with those who enjoy a holiday in common, the Wadsworth family returned to the absorbing routine of work and play that made up their home life. In 1857 took place the marriage of the eldest daughter to Montgomery Ritchie, of Boston, grandson of Harrison Gray Otis; in 1859 Charles completed his studies in Paris, being the first American to receive the diploma of the French school.

Meanwhile the Genesee Valley was suffering from a term of lean years that coincided most unfortunately with the period of depression caused by the financial panic of 1857. The extent of the disaster, due to the ravages of a tiny insect called the wheat midge, appears from a report which Wadsworth communicated to the State Agricultural Society:

The midge was seen here in 1854; a little in Monroe and Livingston counties; did no material damage; more seen in 1855; did no material damage in this county; considerable in Monroe; came from the east. In 1856, the midge took from one-half to two-thirds of the crops in this county on upland, and nearly all on flats; at least 2,000 acres on flats, which would have yielded thirty bushels per acre, not harvested. Worse in 1857, took over two-thirds of crops; 1858, very little white wheat to harvest; a few fields escaped; generally destroyed. Mediterranean wheat escaped generally (as it is supposed from being earlier); perhaps one-fifth Mediterranean destroyed; spring barley very much injured this year by midge. In some cases, one-half to two-thirds crops taken. Winter barley too early for midge. *Very little* white wheat now sown in western New York.

. . . The midge has reduced the value of all the wheat lands in western New York, at least forty per cent. Lands which sold here readily for \$70. per acre, can now be bought for \$40. per acre.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> N. Y. State Agricultural Society Transactions for 1858, p. 300.

In the privations consequent upon the loss of the Genesee Valley's world-wide prestige as a wheat-growing region, Wadsworth's concern was constantly with the sufferings of his tenants. Rejecting their requests that they be allowed to make good the next year the deficiency in their wheat rent, he insisted on a settlement for that season. They must, he declared, first make provision for their families for the coming twelvemonth and then pay him what they could. This done, he squared the accounts, and the tenants began the year debt free. In one case he remitted the wheat rent to the amount of a thousand bushels; in other cases he helped discouraged farmers to remove to Illinois, there to make a fresh start. Thus, of the loss attendant on the discontinuance of one form of agriculture and the adoption of others, Wadsworth assumed the burden to the full extent of his ability.

Acts such as this, affecting the general welfare, together with his participation in politics presently to be mentioned, and, most of all, the geniality and simplicity of his bearing, made James S. Wadsworth, in the fifteen years following his father's death, a citizen whom all western New York regarded with pride and untainted affection. To the strength and sincerity of this feeling his friends and neighbors once, after a long period of suspense as to his safety, bore witness in a fashion most moving and memorable. Having gone to England in the autumn of 1850 to be present at his sister's wedding, Wadsworth had taken passage for the return voyage on the steamer *Atlantic*, sailing from Liverpool on December 28. Eight days out the shaft broke, and for forty-eight hours the vessel was at the mercy of the waves without and the thrashing shaft within, while the crew, aided by such help as Wadsworth and other passengers could give, struggled to set the ice-bound sails. At length getting under way, she headed, with successive changes of wind, for Halifax, Bermuda, the Azores, and Ireland, finally making port at Cork on January 22.

In those days of infrequent ocean service and lack of communication by cable, the prolonged anxiety over the fate of the Atlantic became more and more agonizing to those on shore who were concerned for her safe passage. It was not till the middle of February that the good news reached New York, and it was March 1 before Wadsworth at length reached home. The release from the strain of apprehension and the sight of their fellow-townsmen actually restored to them alive set the people of Geneseo wild with joy. When he drove into the town from Rochester—where the night before he had taken part in a meeting called to set on foot plans for a railroad “up the valley”—he was made welcome with the sound of bells and cannon, to which in the evening were added bonfires and a general illumination of houses. As he narrated to his neighbors the tale of his adventures, the boom of cannon at Mount Morris told of the widening circle of rejoicing. The excitement over his return lasted for days, perhaps reaching an anticlimax in the thanksgiving of the local poet that he had not been thrown

“A waif on the sands of some cannibal coast,”

but altogether furnishing a remarkable instance of what may happen at a time when the threat of peril awakes a community to consciousness of what it holds dear.<sup>1</sup>

The affection of which the little world outside the Wadsworth gates thus made demonstration was the very oxygen of the atmosphere of the home. It was with no effort either on his part or on theirs that he made himself the companion of his children. They trooped on their ponies down to the “home farm” to help their father give salt to the cattle; they accepted eagerly the duties which he laid upon them and which he designed not only to increase their sense of responsibility but also to win them irrevocably to the way of life which he himself loved so well. And as they grew to manhood and womanhood

<sup>1</sup> See the *Livingston Republican* for March 6, 1851.

they became more and more grateful for the comradeship and counsel of one whose character showed in turn the fruits of work, wisdom, and a happy temper. What Wadsworth was as a husband may be gathered from certain touchingly intimate passages in the few long-treasured letters of his sister Elizabeth to his wife. The bride of a few months writes to the mother of six children: "I do think one cannot be happy unless one is married, but I would not say this to any one in the world but you." And at another time, after speaking of her husband's sweetness and purity of nature and his devoted consideration of herself, she declares that he will bear comparison—she never referred to her brother as James—"even with Chéri himself."

During their stay abroad the Wadsworths at one time passed many pleasant days at Vevey with John Lothrop Motley and his family. The two men found each other particularly sympathetic, for both were men of enthusiasms, with no fondness for cautious and tempered speech, and their views of the approaching crisis in the United States coincided. Ten years later, when Motley heard of Wadsworth's death, he wrote of him as follows:

It always seemed to me that he was the truest and the most thoroughly loyal American I ever knew, and this to my mind is his highest eulogy. . . . I often thought of him and spoke of him as the true original type of the American gentleman—not the pale, washed-out copy of the European aristocrat.<sup>1</sup>

The manner in which his character expanded in those trying times, from the agreeable and genial man of the world, the generous and useful landed proprietor, the frank, unaffected, delightful companion, into the hero and the patriot, has always impressed me deeply.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> To Mrs. James S. Wadsworth.

<sup>2</sup> To Thomas Hughes. (J. L. Motley and His Family, Further Letters, p. 207.)

The first of the archways of experience through which Wadsworth attained to this expansion of character was politics. His share in the building up of the Republican party in New York State forms, therefore, the next step in the narrative.

## II

### POLITICS

AN attempt to establish the political status of a citizen of New York accomplishes little if it does not indicate the wing or faction of the party to which he gives his allegiance. Such is the character of these subdivisions, moreover, that any one of them is likely to require of its adherents a stronger loyalty than the party is able to insist upon from them for itself. Hence not only the remarkable vicissitudes in political fortunes in the Empire State but also the bitterness and intensity of personal feeling which has accompanied them.

Though the elder Wadsworth was a sound Whig, the son, in what manner is not known—possibly through the visits to Geneseo of “Prince John”—became a Democrat, an adherent of Martin Van Buren, and a member of the group known as Radicals, in opposition to the Conservatives, or Hunkers. Besides loyalty to the principles of this group, personal acquaintance and friendly regard bound James S. Wadsworth to the able politician who sought and sometimes achieved the distinction of statesmanship. This acquaintance belonged, however, not so much to the days of Van Buren’s brilliancy as Secretary of State, Minister to England, Vice-President, and President, as to the next decade, when, in retirement at Lindenwald, his estate near Kinderhook, he awaited in vain the call to lead his party again and later sallied forth at the head of the Barnburners and Free-soilers, in a campaign the motives of which were a mingling of revenge and anti-slavery ardor.



A letter<sup>1</sup> which is the fruit of this acquaintance between Wadsworth and Van Buren shows Wadsworth's political attitude in the early 'forties. It was written to the ex-President at a white-heat of wrath on the arrival of the news that the Democratic convention of 1844, controlled by the pro-slavery element of the party, had rejected him on account of his opposition to the annexation of Texas and had nominated as its presidential candidate the insignificant Polk.

MY DEAR SIR:

We are all prostrated by the news from Baltimore. We do not know what to say, or how to move. It is an overwhelming wrong and outrage, which excites equally our surprise and our indignation. Here we were completely unprepared for it. We expected agitation, excitement, possibly secession, but never the result we have got. Certainly Mr. Butler<sup>2</sup> and his friends gave up too soon. If it had been a mere question of State preference, such as in their respective states we may suppose to have been felt for Messrs. Polk, Benton, or Buchanan, it would have been another matter, but a great wrong was to be avenged, a great principle vindicated, and it was a principle which the more it was dwelt upon and considered, the more deeply and powerfully it would have been felt. I can not but think a little more firmness would have led to a different result, but they on the spot were perhaps the best judges and at least their fidelity is not to be doubted. I have seen no full account of the debates, but I do not perceive that the dictation and selfishness of the South were properly rebuked. They have filled the Executive Chair 44 years, the North

<sup>1</sup> From the Van Buren Papers, vol. LI, Library of Congress.

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin F. Butler, Van Buren's former law partner, had withdrawn his friend's name when it appeared that the Southern delegates, ignoring Van Buren's claims to nomination by virtue of his record as President and his unjust defeat in 1840, were determined to cast him aside. As a sop to the friends of the rejected candidate, Silas Wright, senator from New York, was given, by a vote almost unanimous, the nomination for Vice-President. Wadsworth's letter was written before the news of Wright's rejection of the nomination had reached Geneseo.



12, and yet because we are not prepared to embark in a most unjust and iniquitous war to extend their "Institutions"—meaning thereby Slavery—our rights are again to be deferred. The only satisfactory feature in this result is the defeat of Cass. If that disorganising, treacherous Hybrid had been nominated, I should have "returned to private life" until after this election, at all events. I have a favorable opinion of Mr. Polk and hoped to have seen him nominated, but not where he is. What will Mr. Wright do? is in everybody's mouth. I shall not doubt that whatever he does will be done from the purest and most patriotic motives, but I sincerely hope he will resign. I can not bear that any one so devoted to you and so true to us should reap any share of the profits of this insult and fraud. Mrs. W. and my sister are so indignant that they reproach me with being too calm, and even my Father, feeble as he is,<sup>1</sup> and nominally a very good Whig, seems to resent it as much as any of us.

At a moment like this, when you must have so many communications to reply to, I shall not expect to hear directly from you, but I really wish you would *command* the Major or Smith to write me. Altho' I do not doubt that all is "calm as a summer's morn" at Lindenwald, I want to know that you are alive and well, after the storm. What shall we do with our great meeting called for the 6th, which would have been the next thing to the *Cattle show*, if all had gone well? I think we shall adjourn it, until we know where we stand.

I am dear Sir

with great regard

Yrs

JA<sup>S</sup> S. WADSWORTH

June 1st 1844

The impatience shown in this letter at the arrogance of Southern Democrats is the first sign of the working in Wadsworth of the anti-slavery spirit which from this time was to grow steadily stronger. And since during the next sixteen years of Democratic control of the Federal government that arrogance increased, demand-

<sup>1</sup> He died within the week.

ing and obtaining from the North one concession after another, mounting from the admission of Texas to the Compromise of 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska act, and the Dred Scott decision, Wadsworth and other men of like mind gained proportionately in firmness of resistance to the extension of slavery. They gained in number, too, for each act of aggression on the part of the South was further proof that the very existence of the nation was thereby threatened; each act made possible a wider acceptance of the words of Lincoln and of Seward that "a house divided against itself cannot stand" and that "it is an irrepressible conflict between opposing and enduring forces, and it means that the United States must and will, sooner or later, become either entirely a slave-holding nation or entirely a free-labor nation."

In the case of Wadsworth, the conviction that the efforts of the Southern leaders to extend slavery must be resisted at every turn came in connection with his participation in State politics; the growth of this conviction must therefore be followed through the perplexing course of the factional quarrels of the New York Democracy.

In the years following the election of Polk, in 1844, the antagonism between the two wings of the New York Democracy grew rapidly more violent. The Conservatives, with their leader, Marcy, in Polk's cabinet as Secretary of War, possessed an advantage which they did not allow to sleep. By one deed of punishment after another they brought the Radicals to a frame of mind like that, it was said, of the farmer who, to rid himself of the plague of rats, was willing to burn down his barn. The Radicals, accepting the taunting title of Barnburners, proceeded to carry out the comparison to the letter.

It was, however, not chiefly the motive of rule or ruin that controlled this faction of the New York Democracy in its fight against the Hunkers, for its leaders, Silas Wright, William Cullen Bryant, David Dudley

Field, Preston King, S. J. Tilden, B. F. Butler, C. C. Cambreling (or Cambreleng), and James C. Smith, stood for a more disinterested kind of public service than any to which the Hunkers (who were supposed to hunker or hanker after office) could possibly make good a claim. Indeed, their ablest man, Silas Wright, United States senator, who was as remarkable for his honesty and his unselfish aims as for his ability, had declined nominations to the Supreme Court of the United States and to the vice-presidential place on the Democratic ticket in 1844. What animated the Barnburners was allegiance to party principles which they felt were being denied both by the Southern leaders and by the other faction within their own State. Furthermore, support of the Wilmot Proviso, which opposed the extension of slavery into territory acquired by the United States, furnished them with a bond of union on a moral question particularly appealing to men of such character as were here found working shoulder to shoulder. Finally, the Barnburners were united by a sense of personal loyalty to beloved leaders and by a desire to avenge the wrongs unjustly visited on the heads of those leaders. Not only was the treatment measured out to Van Buren in 1844 by the Hunkers as yet unrequited; after the State election of 1846, when Silas Wright, who had left the Senate to become governor in the vain hope of bringing harmony into the New York Democracy, was, as a candidate for re-election, defeated by the Hunker influence in the State and at Washington, there was another score to be settled.<sup>1</sup> The memory of this outrage was quickened by Wright's sudden death in August, 1847, and there was danger that the Democratic State convention, soon to be held at Syracuse, would be a battle-ground on which there would be no thought of quarter.

To forestall the chance of collision at the opening of the convention, Preston King and Wadsworth, who by

<sup>1</sup> Hammond's *Life of Silas Wright*, pp. 694-697.

this time held a position of influence in the councils of the Barnburners, arranged with the leaders of the other faction for the appointment of two tellers to call the roll, one of them to be named by Wadsworth.<sup>1</sup> In this manner it was hoped to obtain a measure of fair consideration for the eleven contested seats through which the Hunkers had planned to gain full control of the assembly. But it proved impossible to settle these cases in committee, and in the full convention, though the Barnburners had the aid of "Prince John," the devices of their opponents overmatched them. How passions rose with the long debate over the contested seats and what motive fed those passions is indicated by an incident of which Wadsworth was the hero. It is related by H. B. Stanton, the anti-slavery journalist, with all the zest of a connoisseur in conventions.

Some one spoke of doing justice to Silas Wright. A Hunker sneeringly responded, "It is too late; he is dead." Springing upon a table, Wadsworth made the hall ring as he uttered the defiant reply: "Though it may be too late to do justice to Silas Wright, it is not too late to do justice to his assassins."<sup>2</sup>

The break came, however, not on a point of personal revenge, but on the great national question of slavery. The efforts of the Radicals to pass a resolution indorsing the Wilmot Proviso were brought to naught by a ruling of the presiding officer. "The arbitrary decision of their chairman," to quote the Radical version of what then happened, "sustained and encouraged by the boisterous support of the Conservatives and the lobby, gave rise, at the close, to a scene of unexampled tumult, confusion, and uproar."<sup>3</sup> As a result, the Barnburners succeeded in a body.

<sup>1</sup> The Syracuse Convention. Its Spurious Organization and Oppression and Anti-Republican Action, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Random Recollections, p. 159.

<sup>3</sup> The Syracuse Convention, p. 14.

The events of the next twelvemonth—a year which abounded in conventions and which gave indications clearer than ever before of that breaking up of parties which was to be caused by the slavery issue—carried the two factions farther and farther apart. The result of an appeal issued by a Barnburner mass convention in October was the defeat of the Democratic State ticket; it followed naturally that, when the national party convention assembled in May at Baltimore to nominate candidates for the presidential campaign of 1848, two sets of delegates appeared, each claiming to be the regular representatives of the New York Democracy. Alexander describes the crisis which this war of local factions brought about in the deliberations of the party at large.

New York held the key to the election; without its vote the party could not hope to win; and without harmony success was impossible. To exclude either faction, therefore, was political suicide, and, in the end, the vote was divided equally between them. To the politician, anxious for party success and hungry for office, perhaps no other compromise seemed possible. But the device failed to satisfy either side, and Lewis Cass was nominated for President without the participation of the state that must elect or defeat him.<sup>1</sup>

Wadsworth, as a Barnburner delegate, signed the protest which the Barnburners made to the convention when they withdrew and also the appeal which they immediately addressed to the State Democracy, justifying their action and calling for a convention to meet in Utica to make new presidential nominations. In the enthusiasm of this gathering, when Martin Van Buren was put at the head of a rival Democratic ticket, Wadsworth had a part, too, and so it was all through that inspiring campaign. On the informal ballot for candidate for governor at the Barnburners' State convention he received a few

<sup>1</sup> Political History of New York, II, 130.

votes, but he at once withdrew in favor of John A. Dix. The place then given him on the ticket as elector at large was a recognition of the value of his labors and his name.

The climax of this remarkable movement in New York politics came in August at Buffalo, when it coalesced with similar independent movements in other States, all having as their guiding principle opposition to the extension of slavery, and when the party was formed which took for its motto the words: "Free soil, free speech, free labor, and free men." Here was a gathering of persons who, besides receiving and imparting that enthusiasm and elevation of spirit which are possible when a political issue is blended with a moral issue, possessed leaders with skill sufficient to fuse together such diverse elements as Free-soilers, Conscience Whigs, Barnburners, and Liberty men, and to bring them all to agreement on both platform and candidates. The achievement of this composite party in New York on election day was doubly gratifying: not only was the Democratic vote divided, with the result that Cass was defeated both in the State and in the electoral college, but the number of Democrats who voted for Van Buren constituted more than half the party.<sup>1</sup>

Though the Free Democracy, as this new organization called itself, proved but a half-way house to the party that was to be permanently founded on the principle of opposition to the extension of slavery, there was nothing half-way about the experience it afforded to those who participated in its councils. In explicit terms it taught them that under certain conditions the political benefits of party regularity and success must be sacrificed for the sake of principle. Years later, in the troubled winter of 1860-1861, as well as in the State campaign of 1862, when much depended on Wadsworth's individual

<sup>1</sup> Van Buren received 120,510 votes; Cass, 114,318; Taylor, 218,603. —(*Whig Almanac*, 1849.)



firmness, what he had learned in the Free-soil movement stood him in good stead.

Through the activities of this campaign of 1848, too, Wadsworth was brought into touch with the anti-slavery men who for years had maintained an unflinching position that had won them much contumely and few votes. Though distinct from the abolitionists, who abstained from political action, they received a share of the popular opprobrium attaching to the hated name which was but little less than that borne by the extremists. "The charge of 'abolitionism,'" writes Julian, whose affiliations were entirely with the anti-slavery group, "was flung at me everywhere, and it is impossible now to realize the odium then attaching to that term by the general opinion. I was an 'amalgamationist' and a 'woolly-head.' I was branded as the 'apostle of disunion' and 'the orator of free-dirt.'"<sup>1</sup> Some remarks of Wadsworth's made during the campaign of 1862 show that he, too, had been made to suffer from that animosity which is directed most fiercely of all against a man who has dared to oppose the interests of his class. "I know, for I have sometimes felt, the influence of the odium which the spurious aristocracy who have so largely directed the destinies of this nation for three-quarters of a century have attached to the word 'abolition.' They have treated it, and too often taught us to treat it, as some low, vulgar crime not to be spoken of in good society or mentioned in fashionable parlors."<sup>2</sup>

In explaining Wadsworth's uncompromising position on matters connected with the question of slavery, account must in a measure be taken of his remoteness from the commercial influence prevailing in the Northern cities and from his family connections in conservative Boston and Philadelphia society. But he was the last man in whom such interests, even if close at hand, could have availed to deaden the motive that chiefly aroused his

<sup>1</sup> Political Recollections, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 160.

opposition to slavery—an inborn hatred of injustice and oppression. This hatred his ardent temper was constantly impelling him to express in deed as well as in word. Single-minded always, he never could be made to feel the weight of reasons for holding back when by going forward there was a chance that a wrong could be righted. This quality has its obvious defects; but when fighting is to be done—and Wadsworth was “ever a fighter”—it is as precious as genius.

A man of this temper, it is hardly necessary to say, has, when inspired by his cause, the gift of imparting his inspiration to others. Even thus early in his political career Wadsworth’s friends had recognized this power of leadership in him and had begun to give him their votes in convention. They knew that if he continued in public life—and he certainly showed none of his father’s aversion to it—his winning a position of eminence in the party was only a matter of time.

During the next four years new quarrels occurred in both sections of the New York Democracy and new adjustments resulted. The Hunkers divided into Hards and Softs; among the Barnburners there was a separation between the personal adherents of Van Buren and the anti-slavery men. The Softs and the Van Buren men united and, sometimes with the aid of the anti-slavery men, opposed the Hards. In general, however, it was for the anti-slavery men a period of preparation rather than of fighting. But when the false peace of the Compromise of 1850 was shattered by the Kansas-Nebraska agitation of 1854, they knew that their time had come. The proposal that the people of the Territories should be allowed to settle for themselves the question of the existence of slavery within their borders constituted a violation of the Missouri Compromise and made possible the spread of slavery into regions from which it had been understood to be forever excluded. With the whole North roused as never before against this new act of aggression on the part



of the South, it was but natural that Wadsworth and his friends should first endeavor to make their own Democratic party the vehicle of this protest. At the State convention of Softs on September 6, 1854, the enthusiasm of the delegates seemed to be for a resolute stand, but when it came to voting, the anti-Nebraska resolution of the anti-slavery men was defeated, whereupon, under the lead of Preston King, they left the hall.<sup>1</sup> At the convention of 1855, after a stormy three days' session, they succeeded in bringing the Softs to condemn the Kansas outrages, but their work was soon undone, for the exigencies of the national Democratic convention of 1856 forced the Softs to unite with the Hards on a pro-slavery basis. As a result of this union the situation of the anti-slavery group was that of a man who finds himself on the steps with the house door slammed in his face.

This remnant, free now to act in accordance with its singleness of aim, met in convention at Syracuse on July 24, 1856. Wadsworth presided. His remarks on taking the chair,<sup>2</sup> strongly as they expressed regard for the party which he and his associates were now compelled to leave, expressed still more strongly allegiance to that principle which was "one of the corner-stones of the Democracy of New York, a stone of Jefferson granite—opposition to the extension of slavery." On this question in 1848 the people of the State had spoken. "I believe," continued Wadsworth, "that they are what they were then—if I may be allowed the expression—only more so. And I am impatient for the day to come when they will record this verdict on the issues before us." With hearty applause for the speaker, the convention proceeded to business.

The men whom Wadsworth addressed were wise as well as devoted and saw that the logic of the situation left but one course of action open to them. The Republican party in New York was entering upon its third

<sup>1</sup> Political History of New York, II, 197.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix D.

campaign; the year before it had received into its organization the great Whig leaders, and it was now preparing to sweep the State for Frémont. The members of this convention of Democratic-Republicans, as they called themselves, having repudiated the Democratic platform and the Democratic candidate, James Buchanan, proceeded to nominate Frémont, indorsing, in an address and resolutions reported by David Dudley Field, the principle of opposition to the extension of slavery for which Frémont stood. They thus in effect announced themselves ready to receive an invitation from the Republicans, and they concluded their business by appointing a State committee, of which Wadsworth was chairman, "to further the objects of the convention."<sup>1</sup>

As anti-slavery men it was, perhaps, not difficult for the loyal members of this group to join hands with other opponents of the hated institution; but it was hardly to be expected that they should accept without question the personal leadership of the former Whig chieftains, William H. Seward and Thurlow Weed, against whom they had fought for years. A body so compact and homogeneous was none too likely under the best circumstances to disintegrate, scattering its components through the larger organization; as it was, the habit of opposition to Seward and Weed continued in force and held them together, the nucleus in New York of what were later known as Radicals, or Black Republicans.

The tendency of these former Democrats to rally by themselves was manifested as soon as they were received into the fold at the Republican State convention, which assembled at Syracuse on September 17. The nomination of Wadsworth for governor was the recompense of reward which they desired; but they commanded barely a third of the delegates, and Weed, though he and Wadsworth had always been personally on friendly terms, was

<sup>1</sup> Proceedings of the Democratic-Republican State Convention at Syracuse, July 24, 1856.

otherwise minded. Wishing a man of Whig antecedents to head the ticket, he had chosen John A. King, the son of Rufus King. On the first ballot the vote stood: King, 91; Wadsworth, 72; Draper, 23; Clark, 22; Harris, 22. The followers of the last three, who had belonged to the Whig party, were easily persuaded to throw their votes to King; but the Wadsworth men stood firm. The result of the second ballot was: King, 158; Wadsworth, 73. "It was not soon forgotten," writes Alexander, "that in the memorable stampede for King, Wadsworth more than held his own."<sup>1</sup>

In another instance that presently occurred of the unwillingness of the anti-slavery Democrats in the Republican party to submit to Whig leadership, Weed's handling of the difficulty furnishes an excellent example of the skill which made him so formidable. "To allay any bitterness of feeling which the nomination of John A. King might occasion," says Alexander, "it was provided that, in the event of success, the senator to be chosen by the legislature in January, 1857, should be of Democratic antecedents."<sup>2</sup> The strength shown by Wadsworth in the September convention naturally made him a candidate for this office, and his supporters were active. Of the men whose names were under consideration, however, Preston King made the strongest appeal. Not only was his anti-slavery record unimpeachable, but his service in Congress had given him a national position which the others lacked. Though Weed contended that the understanding in September had been for Preston King, he avoided the appearance of dictation by referring the matter to a caucus of the Republican members of the legislature who had formerly been Democrats. Their choice of King was decisive.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Political History of New York, II, 236. Wadsworth refused to be a candidate for nomination as lieutenant-governor, but accepted a place on the ticket as elector at large.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 243.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 244, 245.

The friction thus begun in the Republican party in New York between the leaders of Whig and the leaders of Democratic antecedents was a difficulty destined to increase and, as in the case of other factional difficulties in the Empire State, to invade the national convention of the party with far-reaching results. The labor of Weed for years had led up to the nomination of Seward as the Republican candidate for President in 1860. As the delegates to the convention began to assemble at Chicago, the opposition to Seward among the old Barnburners gained importance by the accession of Horace Greeley. The objection which had most weight with them and which now they urged most plausibly on the men from other States was Seward's weakness in New York by reason of his record in matters of State politics. "At Chicago," writes H. B. Stanton, "Seward encountered the opposition from his own State of such powerful leaders as Greeley, Dudley Field, Bryant, and Wadsworth. The first two were on the ground and very busy. The two latter sent pungent letters that were circulated among the delegates from various States. The main point of the attack was that Seward could not carry New York."<sup>1</sup>

If the estimates of Seward's weakness in his own State were perhaps exaggerated, his connection with Weed and the fear that if one were in the White House the influence of the other would be as dominant in Washington as it had hitherto been in Albany played their part in undermining his strength with the delegates from other States. The gubernatorial candidates in Pennsylvania and Indiana declared that with Seward a candidate they could not carry their own State elections in October. Thus it befell that the man who was the recognized leader of his party was passed by and Abraham Lincoln chosen. In the assessment of conventions long years of able service signify often merely the disadvan-

<sup>1</sup> Random Recollections, p. 214.

tages of a "record," and the award is given to the man who, by reason of few achievements, has few foes.

As the time for the State convention approached, Wadsworth declined to allow the use of his name in connection with the nomination for governor. His reasons he gave to E. N. Packard, of Nunda, in a letter dated July 31:

I cordially thank you for the friendly feelings which you express as to my nomination by the Republicans at the approaching election. I should not on this important occasion refuse to serve our party in any capacity in which I might be deemed useful, but I consider the renomination of Gov. Morgan as due to him for the faithful performance of his duties, and at the same time as the best course to pursue, and maintain the integrity of the party. I think the best elements in the party are now united in his favor. If we abandon him, the powerful interests, controlled by and connected with the corrupt legislation of last winter,<sup>1</sup> may force upon us a candidate of their choice. This would be, and ought to be, fatal to the party in this State. For these reasons I have refused to have my name presented to the convention as a candidate, and should, if a delegate myself, earnestly urge the renomination of Gov. Morgan.

When the convention assembled, Morgan was renominated by acclamation. Wadsworth's name for the third time found a place on a party ticket as presidential elector.

With the election of Lincoln the question as to who should represent New York in his cabinet became one of moment to the group of men whom the *New York Herald* called "the Van Buren Democratic Buffalo Free-soil wing of the Republican party,"<sup>2</sup> for it was understood that Seward would not accept a place at the hands of his suc-

<sup>1</sup> The grants of charters for street railroads in New York City. Governor Morgan vetoed them all but one, but the legislature passed them over his veto. See Brummer's Political History of New York State during the Period of the Civil War, pp. 23, 41.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Alexander, II, 395.

cessful rival. Late in November a number of them met in New York and formed a committee to recommend to the President-elect the most eligible of the New York Radicals.<sup>1</sup> Extracts from letters written in this connection by H. B. Stanton to Senator Salmon P. Chase, of Ohio, whose claims, as another Radical, were also urged by them for some other place in the cabinet, furnish interesting testimony as to the position which Wadsworth's political activity had given him.

The names most frequently mentioned by the sound Republicans of our State, for a seat in the Cabinet, are Mr. Greeley, David Dudley Field, Jas. S. Wadsworth, and Wm. Curtis Noyes. . . . Messrs. Field, Noyes, and Wadsworth are all able men. . . . The old Barnburners, who were in the fight of 1848, and are now sound and honest Republicans, would doubtless prefer either Mr. Field or Mr. Wadsworth. . . . In fine, if we are to have a man of democratic antecedents the first choice I think would be Mr. Field. If he cannot be had, then Mr. Wadsworth.<sup>2</sup>

Of Mr. Wadsworth I have room to say but little. He is one of the most reliable men in the State. He was with us heart and soul in the Buffalo fight of '48. . . . His integrity and courage are unquestionable, and he is one of the most popular men in New York.<sup>3</sup>

Though the news that Seward had after all consented to serve in the cabinet was soon made public, the men with whom Wadsworth stood had still plenty to fight for and unabated zest for the fray. The scramble for office in the first weeks after Lincoln's inauguration involved them in a struggle with the conservatives of the party in New York, the issue being the ascendancy of one group or the other in State affairs. Charles A. Dana has described a scene at the White House when Wadsworth acted as

<sup>1</sup> Brummer's Political History of New York State during the Civil War, p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> Correspondence of S. P. Chase.—(Annual Report of the American Historical Association, 1902, II, 485.)

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 488.



spokesman for a group of New Yorkers, to whose protests Lincoln replied: "One side shall not gobble up everything. Make out a list of places and men you want, and I will endeavor to apply the rule of give and take."<sup>1</sup>

Though the contest was spirited, its importance has been dwarfed by the giant events that overshadowed it. Of the status of the two factions, however, when the places were filled, record must be made, for their relative strength has a bearing on the State campaign two years later. The Seward-Weed wing obtained nearly all it sought for except the most important office of all—the collectorship of the port of New York. It also achieved a triumph in defeating Horace Greeley, who sought to succeed Seward as United States senator. On the other hand, Weed's prestige was seriously damaged because, in order to defeat Greeley, he was obliged to throw over his own candidate, William M. Evarts; furthermore, the loss of the custom-house patronage was a severe blow. Hiram Barney, the new Collector, was a Radical and the friend of Chase, who had become Secretary of the Treasury. The means of communication and influence thus established between New York and Washington was of the utmost value to the Black Republicans, as they were derisively called; it brought them into close touch with the administration and made it impossible for Seward to have his way unopposed in matters affecting State politics.

One last event before Wadsworth was summoned by the call to action in another field requires chronicle here. Early in February, 1861, he was chosen one of the eleven commissioners elected by the legislature to represent New York at the Peace Conference. Assembling in Washington at the call of Virginia, delegates from twenty-one States debated for nineteen days in a vain endeavor to frame such a constitutional amendment as would satisfy both North and South and thus save the Union,

<sup>1</sup> Recollections of the Civil War, p. 3.

which seemed in the very act of dissolution. Wadsworth took no part in the speech-making that prolonged the sessions of the conference; but David Dudley Field, the chairman of the New York delegation, William Curtis Noyes, and James C. Smith put before the convention in language plain and firm the resolve of the radical Republicans that the fruits of their well-won victory at the polls should not be compromised away. This firmness, though it showed no bravado, was of the kind that stands ready, if necessary, to make good every word with a blow. Field, in fact, proposing as a part of the constitutional amendment a declaration that no State can secede, said: "The people of my section wish to know whether we can compel the obedience of a State if every man in it undertakes to refuse obedience. They believe that power to exist in the Constitution now. If there is any doubt about it, they wish that power distinctly asserted."<sup>1</sup>

The promptness with which this resolution was voted down was only one of many happenings of the conference that proved how wholly disinclined were the Southerners to yield one inch of the ground which a political domination covering many decades had taught them to regard as their own. The compromising done, therefore, was on the part of those Northern delegates who were willing to make almost any sacrifice of party principle for the sake of the Constitution and the Union.<sup>2</sup> In

<sup>1</sup> Chittenden's Report of the Proceedings of the Peace Convention, p. 396.

<sup>2</sup> The speech of William E. Dodge, who represented the merchants of New York, reads like a parody of the arguments constantly used by those who shrink from introducing a moral issue into politics on the ground that it will "hurt business":

"I am unused to public discussion or arguments, but I am a business man, and I take a business view of this subject. I can see as clearly as I can see the sun at noonday the causes of our present embarrassment. I believe I can see equally clear how those causes may be removed. . . .

"The delegates from New England in this conference seem to be the most obstinate and uncompromising. They aver that they cannot agree to these propositions because their adoption involves a sacrifice of principles, that New England is opposed to slavery and will not consent to put it into



the proposed constitutional amendment as prepared in committee and as voted upon by the conference, the wishes of the South were triumphant everywhere save in the provision prohibiting the African slave-trade.<sup>1</sup>

Though the victory, such as it was, lay with the "Union-savers"—a Union which seven States had already repudiated—the no-compromise men brought away from this much-ridiculed Peace Conference a conviction that soon proved of vastly more value than any point which they might have gained by a majority vote. The frank talk which these men from North and South had exchanged in the sessions of the conference and in hotel lobbies had, for the anti-slavery men, put beyond question the fact that the Southerners meant to fight. The corollary of this conviction—that the North must prepare itself to encounter them on the field of battle—gave to the handful of radical Republicans from New York and Massachusetts, amongst all those who loved

the Constitution, nor to its extension. They say the people hate slavery and will not for that reason accept these proposals.

"I do not believe one word of this. I know the people of New England well: they are true Yankees; they know how to get the dollars and how to hold on to them when they have got them. They are a shrewd and calculating as well as an enterprising people; they understand their interests and will protect them. They will not sit quietly by and see their property sacrificed or reduced in value. Once show them that it is necessary to adopt these propositions of amendment in order to secure the permanence of the government and to keep up the property and other material interests of the country, and they will adopt them readily. You will hear no more said about slavery or platforms. They will never permit this government, which has contributed so much to their wealth and prosperity, to be sacrificed to a technicality, a chimera."—(Chittenden, Peace Convention, pp. 194, 195.)

<sup>1</sup> In the final voting, which was done by States, the vote of New York was divided on six of the seven articles of the proposed amendment. The loss of the vote of the State was due to the unexpected absence of Field, the chairman, who was called to attend an important case before the Supreme Court. His behavior in leaving for this reason occasioned much bitterness of feeling among the men who with him would have made a majority of the State delegation and thus thrown the vote of the State against compromise. See the majority report of the New York commissioners, signed by Field, Noyes, John A. King, Wadsworth, A. B. James, and J. C. Smith, with the statements appended to it.—(Chittenden, Peace Convention, pp. 585-604.)

the Union, the key to the future. For the next few weeks there were almost none to heed their message; but when at last war broke out it was they, with their vision long since clarified and their unyielding temper, who were ready, and it was the militia of their States that were the first armed troops to reach the capital of the nation.

On April 11, 1861, Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote a letter to his friend Charles Sumner, senator from Massachusetts, enclosing a check for two hundred odd dollars; the sum, he explained, was the remnant of an unsettled account between himself and the United States that went back to the days of his consulship at Liverpool, and he begged Sumner to turn the check over to the United States Treasury. "It is full time," he wrote, "to rectify the mistake, for the probabilities seem to be that the government to which, if anywhere, I am responsible, will soon crumble away, leaving me to burn my fingers forever with money not my own."<sup>1</sup> The feeling of distrust and despair which prompted Hawthorne's act—the sense that the end of things was at hand—formed a trouble that hung low over many another mind in the North during these early days of April. With the first shot against Sumter, fired within twenty-four hours of the writing of this letter, dawned the era of war, and with it the day of Wadsworth's destiny. He was then more than fifty-three years old.

<sup>1</sup> Pierce-Sumner collection, Harvard College Library.

## CHAPTER III

### THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR: BULL RUN

WHEN, following close upon the news of the surrender of Sumter, came Lincoln's call for troops to put down resistance to the authority of the United States Government in the Southern States, all the hesitation and uncertainty of these days of waiting were dispelled. As one man, the people of the North declared that the Federal Union must be fought for and preserved. Bearing their part in the "glorious uprising" of the people, men of influence and affairs in New York City came together by spontaneous action to do quickly and thoroughly the work that must be done to save the government at Washington. As the week wore on, thrilling events, coming in rapid succession, lifted the people to higher and higher levels of patriotic devotion. On Friday, April 19, the march of the splendid Seventh Regiment down Broadway through a "tempest of cheers two miles long"<sup>1</sup> stirred the city as it had never been stirred before; later in the day came the news that the Sixth Massachusetts had been fired upon in the streets of Baltimore; on Saturday, at a mass-meeting in Union Square, the war feeling, now at its height, was unified for action by the organization of the Union Defense Committee of the City of New York. Wadsworth had been among the first to spring forward with offers of help, and the value of his services was now recognized by his being made a member of its executive committee of thirteen.

While the "solid men of Wall Street," thus backed by public sentiment, were perfecting their organization

<sup>1</sup>Theodore Winthrop, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1861, p. 745.

and raising money, Wadsworth found a special piece of work that needed immediate attention. The land route to Washington had been blocked by the destruction of the railroad bridges and track north of Baltimore; a sea route by way of Annapolis must be improvised and boats must be chartered to convey troops, provisions, and men for repairing the railroad. On this very Saturday morning a telegram from the colonel of the New York Seventh at Philadelphia announced his intention of obtaining a steamer and going to Annapolis by water and asked that a vessel loaded with provisions be sent thither immediately.<sup>1</sup> The task of procuring a vessel for this purpose Wadsworth at once took in hand. It was perhaps unusual for an up-State squire, versed in herds and crops, to undertake a maritime negotiation of this sort; but the act is highly characteristic of the spirit that prevailed in those fervid days. He went searching about among docks, examining boats and interviewing owners, and on Sunday evening brought back from Elizabethport the Kill von Kull, a double-end, side-wheel ferry-boat of large capacity.

For the next three days Wadsworth and the other members of his sub-committee were busy stocking the ferry-boat with materials needed at Annapolis. On Wednesday he was able to report to the executive committee that the following morning at seven the Kill von Kull would leave for Annapolis, carrying provisions, clothing, horses, and one hundred laborers with tools to lay rails and to keep open the railroad from Annapolis to Washington. At the same time he gave them his draft for seventeen thousand dollars to cover the cost of chartering the boat.<sup>2</sup> Later in the day, when rumors of

<sup>1</sup> History of the New York 7th Regt., I, 478.

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Union Defense Committee, deposited at the N. Y. Historical Society. For the expenses which Wadsworth incurred, amounting to \$15,588, he was later reimbursed by the committee. See also War of the Rebellion, Official Records, Navies, series I, vol. IV, 432, and Union Defense Committee, pp. 17, 18.

Confederate privateers in Chesapeake Bay reached New York, it was necessary to appeal to the commandant of the Brooklyn navy-yard, who provided the Monticello, which he had been arming, as a convoy. On Thursday, April 25, the vessels got under way, arriving at Annapolis two days later.

Wadsworth himself, meanwhile, deeming that an ocean voyage on a ferry-boat was no part of his duty of patriotism, had taken the train for Philadelphia. There, from conversation with railroad officials, he got some light as to the causes of the demoralization which had for the last five days kept Washington isolated from the rest of the country. At the end of the day he wrote back to New York as follows:<sup>1</sup>

PHILA., April 25, 11 P. M.

DEAR SIR:—

Upon reflection, I decided that I could better execute my commission by going to Annapolis by Havre de Grace in advance of my ship.<sup>2</sup> I have just had an interview with General Patterson. He did not know where any of our ships or troops were, what was the condition of the Annapolis and Washington R.R., or what was being done about it. I have since seen Mr. Felton, the superintendent of the Baltimore Road. He informs me that the Massachusetts Sappers and Miners are at work on the road, have about eight miles finished, and twelve to complete, on which there are no very heavy repairs. On my telegraphic advice this morning, he sent me a gang of regular track hands. He thinks my tools and materials furnished by Mr. Sloan will be much needed. He thinks there are about eight thousand troops in Annapolis, plenty of *raw* provisions, but much confusion and some suffering. General Patterson is to send on a quarter-master from the regular

<sup>1</sup> This letter is printed, with some trifling errors, in the Union Defense Committee, p. 150. Lincoln's order that the Pennsylvania troops which had advanced to Cockeyville should return was the result of his purpose to give no opportunity for the disloyal sentiment in Maryland to make headway.

<sup>2</sup> See general map at the end of the volume.

army with me in the morning. I saw the orders to withdraw the troops from Cockeysville, "to prevent unnecessary excitement and irritation in Baltimore," drawn by Cameron at the request of the President. I blushed for my country and *our* President as I read them.

All the efficiency, energy, and capacity here is found outside the military organizations. Thompson, President Pennsylvania Central, and Felton, have accomplished almost all that has been done. They and other private citizens here and elsewhere have saved the Capital.

As the Capital is now safe and the Government seems to be without a plan for the future, I think the heavy expenses of our Committee in chartering steamers should be reduced. It is inexpedient to send forward large reinforcements until the organization of the army is completed, or at least made better than it is at present. Has any one authority to send home such steamers as are not needed at Annapolis?

I will write you as often as I find time, and you can read to the Committee whatever you think worthy of their attention.

Truly yours,

JAMES S. WADSWORTH.

SIMEON DRAPER.

The impatience with official slowness and incompetence which this letter betrays reveals how little Wadsworth or any other man caught up by the war enthusiasm that was sweeping the North could at the moment understand and make allowance for the difficulties under which Lincoln and his advisers were laboring. Not only were they new at their work, but they could not tell whom to trust. Resignations from the departments and from the army and navy were of daily occurrence. Virginia was almost certain to join the Confederacy; Maryland was doubtful. Moreover, cut off from the North, they could not imagine to what pitch of devotion to the Union the spirit of the people had risen. Their hands were tied; the dignity of the government must suffer itself to be succored by the efforts of private indi-

viduals and of States as prompt and loyal as Massachusetts and New York.

The confusion which Wadsworth found when he reached Annapolis on April 26 and the irritation which that confusion bred were described by the correspondent of the *New York Times*:<sup>1</sup>

The Annapolis and Elk Ridge Railroad, eighteen miles in length, having one locomotive, two baggage and two passenger cars, constructed in primeval times, is the sole direct link of the United States Government with nineteen millions of people, with its army and navy, with its diplomatic corps in Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America. There ought to be some new rolling-stock at once put upon this little branch, and then two mails a day should be sent from Washington via Annapolis and Havre de Grace, and a telegraphic communication kept up through the same points. The fact is, there is a universal disorder and want of organization through the whole route; a perfect waste of provisions at one point and a dearth at another—no regularity or system anywhere. The soldiers are fired with a noble enthusiasm, but even the most ideal patriotism cannot stand long against bad salt beef, stale bread, and universal carelessness and want of order.

What a pity if this grand movement of patriotism should all come to an end through bad commissariat and stupid routine! Thank Heaven! I said, when I saw the *Kill von Kull* appearing in the Annapolis Harbor, laden with the bounty of our generous merchants—these are business men's arrangements for the emergency.

Mr. Wadsworth was all ready to meet her, and a grand supply she had—tea, coffee, cheese, biscuit, hard bread, hams, etc., etc., with some light wagons which will be very acceptable for sick and wounded.

By Saturday, April 27, when the *Kill von Kull* reached Annapolis, things were beginning to get into shape under the vigorous management of General Benjamin F. Butler. The railroad had been taken possession of by the govern-

<sup>1</sup> May 3, 1861.



ment and the repairs so well begun by the Massachusetts troops could be speedily finished by Wadsworth's gangs of workmen. As rapidly as possible the provisions were unloaded from the Kill von Kull, conveyed to the railroad station, and put into cars. On Sunday afternoon the train started for Washington, stopping every two miles or so, wherever a detachment of troops was posted, to distribute food. "The abundant supply," wrote Thurlow Weed, who made the journey with Wadsworth, "was received by men who had been twelve, eighteen, and twenty-four hours without rations with avidity not unlike that witnessed in menageries when the animals are being fed."<sup>1</sup> As soon as he had completed his distribution, Wadsworth started homeward, reaching New York on May 1.<sup>2</sup>

During Wadsworth's absence, the executive body of the Union Defense Committee, at the sessions which it held often twice a day, had been pushing on its arrangements for forwarding troops to Washington. In the first two weeks, when it was a question of sending off militia organizations for the defence of the capital, their singleness of zeal and their complete adequacy to the situation were indispensable. But later, when the Federal and the State governments each in its own way undertook to raise troops for a longer term of service, these two sources of authority and the volunteer committee, working at cross-purposes, became tangled beyond any method of extrication save that of the shears.

<sup>1</sup> Life of Thurlow Weed, II, 341.

<sup>2</sup> The manner in which fact mellows into anecdote is illustrated by the form which this effort of Wadsworth's takes in General E. D. Townsend's *Anecdotes of the Civil War*, p. 12:

"At about this time General Scott received a telegram from General James S. Wadsworth in New York, asking him if a vessel-load of cheese would be acceptable. I well remember the expression of satisfaction with which the general dictated a reply to be sent that it would be; for it was really a question of some concern whether the army commissary and the private grocery and provision stores would have subsistence enough for citizens and troops until the way could be opened from the North. The cheese arrived safely and was issued to the troops."



On April 16 the State legislature had authorized the raising of thirty-eight regiments to serve for two years, and Cameron, the Secretary of War, on May 3 accepted them all. On May 4 Lincoln called for forty regiments of volunteers to serve for three years; but the quotas required of the respective States were not announced till twelve days later. When this call—another indication of the state of incomprehensiveness in which the administration still dwelt—proved ridiculously disproportionate to the war enthusiasm of the North, the government had not the courage or the power to curb the offerings of the loyal States. True, the Secretary of War, by ways of exasperating deviousness, sought to cut down the number of regiments which the governors of States were to supply; but the President, with reckless disregard of official responsibility and of orderly administrative procedure, gave permission for raising regiments and brigades to any pertinacious applicant for military distinction. The result was a high degree of irritation among the State executives, for the officers so commissioned, appearing in their respective States, began to recruit men for their organizations in direct competition with the efforts of the State authorities. Thus at the very outset the inexperience of Lincoln and the indirectness of Cameron operated to prejudice against the new administration a number of the best of the Northern governors—precisely the men whose support was most needed in this people's war.

To help in establishing a working arrangement in this matter Wadsworth made a trip to Washington. The letter which he wrote to Governor Morgan on May 23 reveals his discouragement:

I do not know that I can give you any further information as to the entanglements at Washington. The truth is, the Government is weak, miserably weak at the head. The President gets into at least one serious scrape *per diem* by hasty, inconsiderate action. While

I was there he accepted X——'s regiment and regretted it an hour after. He (X——) is a disgraced man, as was well known to General Scott, at the Navy Department, and to Mr. Cameron; but they were not consulted. The President is undoubtedly committed to some extent to Y——, but regrets it too late, as he thinks. If I was Governor and X—— brought the order to me he will bring to you, I should advise the President that I had no objections to Colonel X——'s leaving the state and remaining out of it indefinitely, but that I objected to his taking citizens of this state out of it under his control. I should likewise reply to the enclosed circular<sup>1</sup> that I should pay great respect to its valuable suggestions and that I had entire confidence that the President in making appointments from this state would be governed by the same excellent rules. I think after what he now knows of Y—— and X——, and might have learned at once, he would see the point. You will of course regard these suggestions as only half serious.

The readiness with which Wadsworth had addressed himself to these matters of military management, displaying good judgment in all his dealings and giving orders with the air of one who expected obedience as a matter of course—these evidences, taken with his position as a representative of the western part of the State, made it seem proper that one of the high commands of the New York troops should be given to him. Under Cameron's first requisition the State was entitled to two major-generals. The first of these positions fell properly to John A. Dix, who was eminent as a citizen and who had from 1821 to 1828 served in the regular army; the second Morgan offered to Wadsworth.

Although Wadsworth, in common with thousands of others, was eager, at the country's call for men, to offer his services and, if need be, his life, he would himself have preferred that his career as a volunteer officer begin

<sup>1</sup> The circular referred to was that issued by Cameron on May 22 urging governors of States to give commissions to no one of doubtful morals or patriotism. 122 W. R. (War of the Rebellion, Official Records), p. 227.

with some lower rank than the highest. But he was obliged to consider the situation as it existed in New York at the moment, with the danger that the governor might be forced to name some one of even less suitable qualifications than himself. "My own confidence in the propriety of the appointment," he wrote to James C. Smith, "has not got beyond the point that 'I am better than a worse man.'" He did not, therefore, reject the proposal, and in the letter which he sent to Morgan on May 5 he stated his attitude with entire frankness:

As it is possible that I left my position in regard to the appointment at your disposal of Major-General somewhat ambiguous, I beg leave to restate it in writing.

As against a graduate of West Point or an officer of the regular army of fair reputation, for example, and capacity, I can on no account allow my name to be presented as a candidate. As against men who have no advantage over me but a more recent connexion with the Militia, and a fresher knowledge of military technicalities, I do not think it would be presumptuous in me to offer my name.

Thanking you for the friendly terms in which you spoke of this subject in our recent interview, I beg leave to assure you that whatever decision you may come to will be cordially acquiesced in by me.

The question of Wadsworth's fitness, however, was soon obscured by a new issue, and the course of events from it was highly characteristic of the early days of the war. Cameron, at about the time that he had notice from Governor Morgan of the organization of the first seventeen regiments of New York volunteers into two divisions, of which the first was to be commanded by Dix and the second by Wadsworth, reversed his first decision and insisted that general officers must receive their commissions not from the State but from the Federal government. His act, which was not only justifiable but highly necessary, increased for the moment the

difficulties of the three-cornered misunderstanding between the authorities at Albany, the Union Defense Committee, and the War Department. Morgan, insisting on his constitutional power to make the appointments, used arguments that had a strongly Southern sound; Cameron averred that unless the governor yielded this point he would accept no troops at all from New York.<sup>1</sup> But in this, as in the other matters in dispute, it soon became plain that the administration, growing stronger every week, must in the end have its way, and Wadsworth, recognizing this fact, did what he could to relieve Morgan of embarrassment by sending in his resignation. When finally the controversy was adjusted by Cameron's accepting Dix, the first of Morgan's appointees, and giving him a commission as major-general of United States Volunteers, Wadsworth was probably neither surprised nor disappointed.<sup>2</sup>

During the weeks of uncertainty preceding this decision, the fighting tradition of the family, which had in his youth identified him with the militia and which subsequently would have led him into the Mexican War but for his wife's stronger claim,<sup>3</sup> had blossomed into full vigor. The ways of comfort and serenity in which the years of his manhood had been passed had not too deeply overlaid the pioneer spirit acquired in youth from his father and uncle. The strength of will, the resourcefulness in action which those early years had trained him in had been awaiting for the best part of a lifetime such a summons as this. During many decades the material growth of the country had set a premium upon the qualities developed by trade and its cognate affairs in the

<sup>1</sup> 122 W. R., p. 250.

<sup>2</sup> The appointments to the same rank of Butler and Banks in Massachusetts, made as the result of somewhat similar conditions, proved far less desirable than that of Dix.

<sup>3</sup> It is related that he had with difficulty been restrained from giving the name of Monterey to his youngest son, who was born a few days after the capture of that city by the United States troops.

city; here was a call for the capacities bred in men by knowledge of the land and out-of-doors leadership. Possessing these, Wadsworth knew that he possessed also, as he wrote to Smith, "a certain amount of energy and administrative capacity." All these faculties now cried aloud for use.

But infinitely more compelling was the simple call of duty and patriotism. In this crisis of his country's need, when he saw the Union assailed by the power of slavery, the foe that he had so long been fighting—in this crisis the earnest and straightforward nature of the man could see no course open to him but to offer and to risk his life in bearing arms for her preservation.<sup>1</sup> Well beyond the age limit set for volunteers, he could not think of himself as a person accepting exemption for that or for any other reason. And if men of small means could afford to leave their families, was not the shame greater to him if with his affluence he failed to do likewise? So dominant and intense was his mood that he did not hesitate at the appeals of his sons in turn that they should be permitted to join the army, and General Keyes reports his saying at this time: "If my father were alive now, and would not devote his mind, body, and estate to this cause, I could not respect him."<sup>2</sup>

With this driving purpose to fight for his country, what Wadsworth did was highly characteristic. Brigadier-General Irvin McDowell had just been put in command of the troops south of the Potomac, with headquarters at Arlington, the pillared mansion belonging to Robert E. Lee which stands out so boldly to the view from Washington.<sup>3</sup> Thence McDowell, an admirably

<sup>1</sup> "Amid the guarded words of most Northern leaders at the outburst of the war, it was refreshing to hear one loyal man who did not hesitate to avow that he *hated* the rebellion and slavery, and meant to fight them wherever he could."—(Editorial on Wadsworth in the *New York Times*, May 21, 1864.)

<sup>2</sup> Fifty Years' Observation of Men and Events, E. D. Keyes, p. 437.

<sup>3</sup> The Lee estate is now a national military cemetery. Most of those interred there lost their lives in the Civil War.

trained and thoroughly capable soldier, was expected soon to lead his men to battle, for already the cry of "On to Richmond" was beginning to be heard. Of him Wadsworth asked an appointment on his staff as aide. At the request of a man ten years older than himself to serve him in a position of this character McDowell was naturally embarrassed. For aides he desired young men who, besides being quick and active, could be ordered about without any deferential picking and choosing of phrases, and who could, if necessary, be worked for twenty-four hours a day. Manifestly a gentleman of fifty-three, whose white hairs made him appear even older and who was regarded everywhere in New York as one of the foremost citizens of the State, might not be treated in this manner. On the other hand, the intelligence, discretion, and personal force that a good aide must have were certainly Wadsworth's; and these qualities, together with his determination to begin the business of soldiering in such modest fashion, at last prevailed against McDowell's reluctance. Before a week had gone it was apparent that no one on the staff was more active and efficient.

The duties to which Wadsworth now addressed himself brought him to the very centre of things military and showed him still more clearly the respects in which the administration had not yet grasped the magnitude of the task before it. In one way its failure was not strange, for, generally speaking, executive ability had hitherto not been regarded as the strongest of a man's qualifications for public service, and at this particular moment the men responsible for the preservation of the government had all won their experience in the school of small things. Although, as the next few years proved, there was amongst them capacity in abundance only awaiting opportunity, the men actually trained in the control of large affairs were at this time to be found exclusively in the business world, and there chiefly in the circle of railroad management. This disadvantage, especially strong at the beginning of the contest, told of



BRIGADIER-GENERAL IRVIN McDOWELL.

From a photograph taken in July, 1861.







course equally against North and South, but a disqualification peculiar to the North was its aversion to the whole matter of war. It is an historical commonplace that martial affairs had no part in the absorbing industrial life of the Northern States. When, as a matter of national preservation, the need for them came, the people, with true Yankee persistence and conscientiousness, put the bitter business through; then they went back gladly to their pretermitted ways of peace.

Such fundamental facts, when realized, make possible a more vivid comprehension of the trying life at McDowell's head-quarters in the weeks before Bull Run. McDowell himself, in his testimony before the congressional committee on the conduct of the war, five months after the defeat for which he had been made a scapegoat, indicated, though without resentment or tinge of personal chagrin—for he was both a true soldier and a man of the world—the preposterousness of a situation in which, from the inability of the administration to withstand the public clamor for an advance, he was obliged to “organize and discipline and march and fight all at the same time.”<sup>1</sup> “I had no opportunity to test my machinery; to move it around and see whether it would work smoothly or not. In fact, such was the feeling that when I had one body of eight regiments of troops reviewed together, the general [Scott] censured me for it, as if I was trying to make some show. I did not think so. There was not a man there who had ever manœuvred troops in large bodies. There was not one in the army; I did not believe there was one in the whole country; at least I knew there was no one there who had ever handled thirty thousand troops.<sup>2</sup> I had seen them handled abroad in reviews and marches, but I had never

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, 1863, pt. 2, p. 37. (To be referred to hereafter as C. W.)

<sup>2</sup> The United States regular army in 1860 numbered only 16,000 men.—(Report of the Secretary of War, 36th Cong., 2d Sess., Senate Ex. Doc. 1, II, 189.)

handled that number, and no one ever had. I wanted very much a little time; all of us wanted it. We did not have a bit of it. The answer was: 'You are green, it is true; but they are green also; you are all green alike.'"<sup>1</sup>

Russell, the correspondent of the *London Times* (for whom a sensitive Northern public had in store the sobriquet of "Bull Run," because, forsooth, his picture of the flight from the battle held them up to the laughter of Europe), visiting McDowell at Arlington early in July, found the head-quarters staff of the army sheltered in four small tents and recorded the commanding general's apologetic explanation that "there was great jealousy on the part of the civilians respecting the least appearance of display, and that as he was only a brigadier, though he was in command of such a large army, he was obliged to be content with a brigadier's staff."<sup>2</sup> Again, on July 16, the day on which the Union army began its advance toward Manassas, and five days before the battle of Bull Run, Russell met McDowell at the railroad station looking for two batteries which had been ordered to Washington but which had "gone astray" somewhere on the road. "I was surprised to find the General engaged on such duty, and took leave to say so. 'Well, it is quite true, Mr. Russell; but I am obliged to look after them myself, as I have so small a staff, and they are all engaged out with my head-quarters.'"<sup>3</sup> It is not strange that the commander of an army thus casual in its organization, as he drove the correspondent back to his lodgings, "although he spoke confidently, . . . did not seem in good spirits."

The desperateness of the venture upon which an ignorant and tyrannous public was now sending the Union

<sup>1</sup> C. W., pt. 2, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> My Diary North and South, W. H. Russell, II, 145.

<sup>3</sup> Russell's Diary, II, 187. The date under which this entry is made is incorrectly printed as July 19.

army had been from the first apparent to the members of McDowell's staff, and, as soon as the army moved, was plain to all who could reason from the evidence brought them by their eyes and ears. The enlisted men strayed from the line of march at the sight of a tempting blackberry patch and at every opportunity emptied their canteens in order to get a fresh supply of cool water.<sup>1</sup> The officers in their sphere of duty were equally hard to control, and the unfortunate affair at Blackburn's Ford, into which Brigadier-General Tyler, leading the advance, allowed himself to be drawn, showed that even commanders of divisions might prove to be of little reliance in the hour of battle. (See map, page 80.)

Tyler, a typical instance of the men who at the beginning of the war were given high places, was a soldier over sixty years of age who, though a West Point graduate, had left the army more than a quarter of a century before. On the morning of July 18 Wadsworth took to him McDowell's order to proceed to Centreville and to keep up the impression that the Federals were moving on Manassas, where the Confederate army under Beauregard was stationed, but not to bring on a general engagement. Carrying out McDowell's instructions, Wadsworth did his best to make Tyler feel the force of the warning against too great zeal, for on that day it was important to gather further information as to the position of the enemy on the Union left.<sup>2</sup> But Tyler, unamenable to directions, pushed ahead to Bull Run at Blackburn's Ford and there proceeded to dispose his forces as if to make an attack on the strong body of Confederates posted to defend the crossing. Though McDowell's adjutant-general, Fry, and his chief of engineers, Barnard, repeatedly called Tyler's attention to his wilful disregard of the commanding general's orders, their remonstrances were in vain; the demoralizing effect of the repulse which the troops soon suffered was out of all

<sup>1</sup> McDowell's testimony, C. W., pt. 2, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

proportion to the loss in killed and wounded. For this excess of boldness Tyler sought to atone three days later by an excess of caution even more disastrous.

The encounter at Blackburn's Ford, however, was not the only circumstance of ill augury. Beauregard, on the other side of Bull Run, had had ample opportunity to be well informed as to the strength and position of the Federal force, and with the lapse of time the chances that he would be joined by Johnston's army from the Shenandoah Valley grew greater. But McDowell was not yet ready to attack. The information which he must first obtain he had no well-organized and reliable means of getting; moreover, volunteers and militia, with the ignorance of raw troops, were wasting their provisions, and the supply train from Washington was unconscionably slow in arriving. Two long and harassing days engaged the labor of the head-quarters staff in remedying these consequences of defective organization, while the army lay quiet about Centreville, its ears strained to catch the faint sound of locomotives at Manassas Junction which might signify the arrival of Johnston's army to reinforce Beauregard. It was not till the evening of Saturday, July 20, that McDowell called his division commanders together to give them their orders and to explain to them the movements depending for success on their prompt co-operation.

In spite of his care, there was at the very outset of the day of battle a fatal delay. Tyler, with costly caution, moved his advance so slowly that the two divisions behind him, which had a long march to make in order to cross Bull Run at the Sudley Springs ford, some miles up-stream, were held back for full three hours. The time set for the advance was two o'clock on Sunday morning, but when at sunrise McDowell and his staff reached the blacksmith's shop at the corner of the road by which the troops were to march to the right, Tyler's division was not yet out of the way. Wadsworth was

despatched to Tyler to try to stir him to greater activity and to remind him that this was the time when he was expected to go forward to attack.<sup>1</sup> Then, coming back to the blacksmith's shop, he gave help to McDowell, who personally as well as through the efforts of his staff was doing his utmost to expedite matters there. When at last the road was clear, the troops which had been held back pressed forward with the rush of a stream when an obstruction has been removed, and soon regiments were swinging by at double-quick. Already the day was hot, and the road-side began to be strewn with blankets and overcoats. This rush, however, proved of short duration, for the advance of the flanking column was led by the deliberate Burnside. Indeed, at the Sudley Springs ford his horses and men were found by McDowell's staff refreshing themselves in the stream and taking a good rest. Having at last got under way again, after marching a mile or so they received the first shots of the enemy, and by half-past nine the battle had begun.

The stereotyped characterization of the first Bull Run disposes of it as a contest remarkable for the picturesque if disheartening display of what may be expected when untrained volunteers and militia are under fire for the first time. The variety in the Federal uniforms, which ranged all the way from the brilliant Zouave costume to a color which proved disastrously like the Confederate gray; the courageous advances made by one regiment after another without co-ordination; the firmness of the Confederate brigade which won for its commander the immortal epithet of "Stonewall"; finally, that indescribable panic twenty-seven miles long in which fear played her maddest pranks with an army that had become a mob—all these we are familiar with as historic details in the battle which, containing so many touches of comedy, awoke the nation to the tragedy of war. And in the way of reflection we content ourselves with Sher-

<sup>1</sup> McDowell's testimony, C. W., pt. 2, p. 43.

man's comment that in all the war Bull Run was the battle "best planned and worst fought."<sup>1</sup> A far different thing is it, however, to live through the day in the experience of an aide like Wadsworth, who has on his shoulders a part of the responsibility of seeing that plan carried into execution, and who, finding one officer after another inadequate to the performance of his duties, perceives that he must put all his might into multiplying himself to make good these dozens of deficiencies. For him the business was like a prolonged nightmare in which a single, struggling human will is baffled and overwhelmed by superhuman forces.

In truth, McDowell and all his staff were similarly at the mercy of fate. Having sent an aide to the dilatory Tyler at his post at the turnpike bridge to press his attack, and another to hurry up the rear of the turning column, "McDowell, like Beauregard, rushed in person into the conflict, and by the force of circumstances became for the time the commander of the turning column and the force actually engaged, rather than the commander of his whole army."<sup>2</sup>

As for Wadsworth, the kind of work that he took upon himself is illustrated by his part in the charge of the Eighth New York. When, advancing upon the Henry House hill, the regiment made a wrong turn to the left and was exposed to a severe flank fire, Wadsworth, dashing after it, rectified its course, went with it up the hill, and ordered it to charge the woods on the right. Three companies answered his call, with handsome results,<sup>3</sup> but then the regiment encountered, from the belt of pine woods along the southeastern edge of the plateau, the steady fire of Brigadier-General T. J. Jackson's brigade, "standing like a stone wall." Thus assailed, it quickly became demoralized, and that was the end of its service as an organization during the day. "Staff officers,"

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs of Gen. W. T. Sherman, I, 187.

<sup>2</sup> Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, I, 187.

<sup>3</sup> 2 W. R., p. 388.



reported Colonel Porter, the brigade commander, "could be seen galloping rapidly in every direction, endeavoring to rally the broken Eighth, but this laudable purpose was only partially attained, owing to the inefficiency of some of its field officers."<sup>1</sup> One of their officers, Captain Woods, who did his full duty, came under the eye of Wadsworth as he hurried back and forth trying to get the troops into some sort of order. "I witnessed," Wadsworth took the trouble to write to him afterward, "the manner in which you rallied such of your regiment as you could induce to follow you, and led them into action under a terribly severe fire. I saw no officer expose himself more freely in front of his men."<sup>2</sup>

The words apply equally well to Wadsworth himself. The crisis of his first battle revealed him as belonging in the class of such Revolutionary fighters as Stark and Wayne—a man of natural courage and of natural powers of command, whose instinct bade him ever to lead and, leading, to rely upon others to follow. "Well do I remember," writes a lieutenant of the Thirteenth New York, "how he came flying down the steep hill by the 'Old Stone House' at Bull Run, and led the Thirteenth (under a heavy fire from the enemy's battery that commanded the hill) into action."<sup>3</sup>

Wadsworth was later concerned in getting infantry supports for the batteries of Ricketts and Griffin, which had been advanced by McDowell's order to a position on the Henry House plateau. So great were the difficulties in communicating orders, so uncertain was the reliance to be placed on officers or men, and so exigent were the needs of the moment that it was impossible to make any properly organized movement to this end. The most that could be done was to throw forward a regiment or two at a time. The batteries, in their advanced position, were soon lost, and the remainder of

<sup>1</sup> 2 W. R., p. 384.

<sup>2</sup> History of the 10th N. Y., p. 241.

<sup>3</sup> Unidentified newspaper clipping.

the battle resolved itself into a series of attempts to recapture them. In organizing these assaults Wadsworth played his part in helping to form and to send forward some of Franklin's regiments and, after their repulse, some of Sherman's. He was in the thick of the fighting, his horse was shot under him, and more than once when a regiment fell back in confusion he seized its colors and called on the men to rally to the flag.

At last, a little before three o'clock, an advance was made that promised permanent success. The Confederates were driven completely from the open plateau and fresh Union troops were about to come on the field. The balance of victory, so long unsettled, seemed to dip in favor of the Federals. But in the belt of pines Jackson's brigade stood firm, and Wadsworth and others who had seen its stubborn fighting realized that trouble might still be expected from that quarter. At this moment, when the arrival of reinforcements on either side would be decisive, a brigade commanded by Colonel Elzey of Johnston's army appeared without warning on the extreme right of the Union army. As it charged, the Federals heard for the first time the sharp, pulsating "yaai, yai . . . yaai, yaai, yai . . . yaai!" which they soon came to know as the "rebel yell"—the battle-cry that "lasts with the voice of Stentor and with the horn of Roland."<sup>1</sup> Wadsworth happened to be with the troops that received the first discharge of musketry. "It was very severe," he testified, "and then they followed it up immediately with a very bold charge right on the field."<sup>2</sup> At the same time Jackson, having held his men in check for three hours, sent them with irresistible force against the advancing Federal centre. Under this double attack the Union troops completely gave way. Though McDowell and his staff took the colors of one regiment after another in the hope of rallying the men

<sup>1</sup> The Long Roll, p. 93.

<sup>2</sup> C. W., pt. 2, p. 48.



about them, every such effort was futile. The soldiers who in the morning had constituted an army were now individuals seeking the banks of Bull Run and the safety of the other side. Ordering the regulars, who stood firm, to guard the rear, McDowell rode off toward Centreville, where the reserves were stationed.

As Wadsworth followed he did not yet need to abandon himself to despair at this reverse in the fortunes of the day. With the fresh troops at Centreville a stand might still be made, and behind them the men now plodding along the road, showing as yet no signs of panic, might be reformed. But as he drew near Centreville the aspect of things became less promising. Here the road was filled not only with army impedimenta but with light vehicles that had brought spectators from Washington to view the battle from a safe distance. Worse than all, panic had set in. Shot from a Confederate battery had reached the road at one place and rumors of pursuit by the much-dreaded "black horse cavalry" made the danger seem greater at every moment. As twilight came on the thought of the long road still to be covered magnified these terrors tenfold, and McDowell, seeing that his army was ruled by a commander more powerful than he, wisely decided to let the mob flow on to the safety of Washington. The reserve brigades, which were steady, could be relied upon as a rear-guard, but nothing else could be counted on.

It was in this hour of defeat that Wadsworth displayed other qualities no less characteristic of him as a soldier than his courage. His concern was less for the able-bodied fugitives than for the dead left unburied where they had breathed their last and for the wounded remaining on the field of battle and in the hospitals at Centreville, soon to fall into the hands of the enemy. Filled with a sense of all there was to be done here, he helped to find places in wagons for men slightly wounded and encouraged the Federal surgeons to continue in their

duty toward those who could not be moved. Then, when he had accomplished all that was possible, he joined the crowd streaming toward Washington, being accompanied by Montgomery Ritchie, his son-in-law, who, as aide to the commander of the reserves, had been at Centreville all day.

When these two had made their slow way through seven miles of disorganized army to Fairfax Court House it was long after midnight, and, as Wadsworth had been in the saddle since before daybreak, they decided to stop here to refresh themselves and their horses and if might be to get a little sleep. Crowded though the tiny hamlet was with wounded and others whose fatigue had prevailed over their fears, Wadsworth and Ritchie finally succeeded in obtaining a place where they could throw themselves down for a brief rest.

The next morning, Monday, July 22, they found that the fugitive mob had vanished and that the last regiments of the rear-guard were taking their departure. During the night there had been no pursuit, and there was a chance that the heavy downpour of rain, which gave promise of continuing all day, would dampen the ardor of the victorious Confederates. Taking advantage of this chance, Wadsworth decided to remain where he was and to devote himself to the needs of the wounded, some hundred in number, whom he found left at Fairfax Court House with none, in that devil-take-the-hindmost flight, to care for them. He forthwith began to search the small settlement through to procure the food and comforts that these sick men required and to provide means of transportation for them. Ritchie, meanwhile, set out for Washington to obtain from McDowell or from the Secretary of War a request for a flag of truce under which the wounded at Centreville might be brought within the Union lines.

Fortunately for Wadsworth's undertaking, the torrents of rain did not cease during all of Monday. Not

a Confederate appeared on the road from Centreville, and he was successful in getting off to Washington, on foot or in wagons, practically all the men of whom he had assumed charge. He himself did not take his leave until the Confederate cavalry came in sight on Tuesday morning, July 23; and when J. E. B. Stuart and his men reached the Court House at 9.30 A. M. they found there only three wounded officers.<sup>1</sup> Three civilians, come out from Washington to ask for permission to search the battle-field for the body of Colonel Cameron, brother of the Secretary of War, were also encountered and made prisoners. As for Wadsworth, he had not travelled far toward Washington when he met Ritchie bringing the request for a flag of truce, which he had finally succeeded in obtaining from Cameron.<sup>2</sup> Turning his horse back toward Centreville, Wadsworth accordingly proceeded thither with the document.

The unwillingness of Secretary Cameron, however, to do anything that might be twisted into a recognition of the Confederate States of America had led him to address his letter in such a fashion that Major-General J. E. Johnston refused to receive it. After waiting all night Wadsworth was advised to go back to the Union lines, whither in due time an answer, if there was one, would be forwarded.<sup>3</sup> When he reached the Federal pickets he found that the long train of ambulances sent out to meet him had given up waiting and gone back to the city. To disappointment at the failure of his mis-

<sup>1</sup> 2 W. R., p. 995.

<sup>2</sup> The civilians captured by Stuart, who were kept prisoners at Richmond for some months, came without written authorization from Cameron because, according to General Johnston's report of what they said, "a rule established by their authorities forbids flags of truce in such cases" (2 W. R., p. 995). To others making the same attempt a few days later Cameron gave a letter addressed "To whom it may concern." Stuart, in refusing their request, returned it to them "for the reason that its object does not concern me, nor any one else that I am aware of, in the Confederate States of America."—(Marginalia, or Gleanings from an Army Note-Book, by Personne, p. 78.)

<sup>3</sup> Russell's letter to the *London Times* of July 24, 1861.

sion was added disgust at the futile craft of the Secretary of War, a feeling that could have been little abated when he read the Richmond papers that taunted the Federals with making no efforts to relieve their wounded or to bury their dead.<sup>1</sup>

For Wadsworth the campaign of Bull Run ended with his arrival at McDowell's head-quarters at Arlington on the afternoon of July 24, the last man, it is safe to say, to come in from the field. He had, indeed, served his apprenticeship in battle, and the regard that McDowell felt for his service was expressed not only in the complimentary acknowledgment of the commander's official report but also in a recommendation to the President that he be made brigadier-general of volunteers.

Not because it tells any new circumstance of his part in the fight, but for what it shows of the pride which his family took in him, a letter written a month later by his eldest daughter to her aunt in Europe will serve to sum up the story of Wadsworth at Bull Run:

. . . You know all about our disgraceful defeat, but you are too far off to have felt anything like the sense of disgrace that we feel who had husbands and fathers sharing in this odium, who had seen the grand army advance with such feeling of certainty that there could be but one result, and that Victory. That Monday evening when the terrible news came (after the first report of "a great success"), I do assure you that our bitterest tears were shed . . . from the humiliating sense of shame, of intense mortification, that our much vaunted Northern troops, with their "earnestness of purpose" and "sense of right" should have run away.

I am told that strong men on the field of battle, after vainly attempting to rally our disorganized troops, wept from sheer despair; and in the streets of Washington, as the haggard soldiers came pouring in with fresh details about the disgusting retreat and shameful panic,

<sup>1</sup> The taunts were repeated by General Johnston in his Narrative, p. 63, most unjustifiably, since he could hardly have failed to know of Wadsworth's mission.

men forgot their manliness and turned away to hide their emotion.

But it has been a lesson to us that we needed. The great fault, they say, lay with the volunteer officers, not the men. Some of these officers behaved most shamefully. Two colonels of regiments were met seven miles from their men, flying to Washington. Father, in carrying orders, constantly came on regiments and parts of regiments with only a lieutenant or some minor officer in command. This will be changed now, and officers have to undergo a strict examination before being commissioned, and the most rigid discipline, which was very much neglected before the battle.

You must read all Russell's letters to the *London Times*; they are correct in most particulars though much exaggerated. Monty saw a great deal of him in Washington, dining and breakfasting with him constantly; he says he is the most brilliant, entertaining person, but withal the most prejudiced John Bull. Consequently the *London Times* has said the most scathing things about us since our defeat, speaking of our army as entirely composed of New York rowdies and Boston Abolitionists, and saying that the Volunteers have proved themselves utterly worthless in opposing the "Gentlemen of the South."

I send you some newspaper paragraphs about Father which you may not have seen. They appeared in the New York press soon after the battle. There is but one story of his conduct, and you can imagine how proud we are of him. McDowell told Monty that he was the youngest man among them, and capable of enduring more fatigue on horseback.<sup>1</sup> The day of the battle he was in the saddle twenty-four hours and Monty twenty. Monty was with the reserve, which did not move as soon as the main army; he was on the staff of Colonel —— (of the regular army), who commanded the reserve. This Colonel —— was superseded on the field of battle for drunkenness; the staff was of course dispersed, and Monty joined Father. They were the last officers who

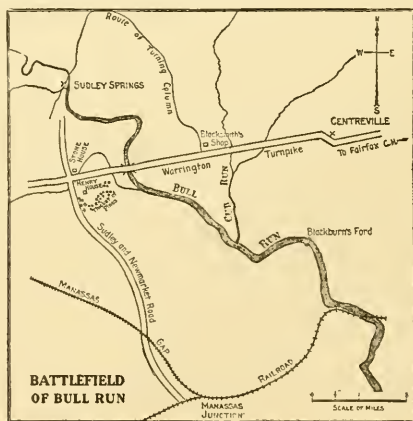
<sup>1</sup> At the age of twelve or thirteen Wadsworth had ridden all the way from Geneseo to New York, helping his uncle drive thither a herd of cattle. Life in the saddle was always as much a matter of course with him as it is with any ranchman.

passed through Fairfax Court House; Father remained till Tuesday to look after the wounded, and Monty rode into Washington on Monday afternoon to get a flag of truce from the War Department. This Father carried to their lines; he was kept waiting by the roadside for eight hours, and then vouchsafed no answer, as the communication was not properly addressed. . . .

Father has now been made a brigadier-general, and Monty<sup>1</sup> is going to try and get into one of the new regiments. Craig will, I think, go as one of Father's aides. . . . Almost everyone feels that we must make great effort and great sacrifice; but unfortunately there are a great many "Copperheads"<sup>2</sup> in our midst who are doing their utmost to discourage enlistment, and with too much success. This the newspapers hardly dare to speak of, but it is true.

<sup>1</sup> Montgomery Ritchie, having helped to recruit the regiment known as the Wadsworth Guards, accepted an offer to join Burnside's expedition to North Carolina, but ill health forced him to return to the North in the summer of 1862. Later he served on the staff of Major-General Augur, division commander in Banks's expedition to Louisiana, and displayed gallantry before Port Hudson; but disease again interrupted his service, and in May, 1864, continued ill health compelled him to resign. He died at Geneseo six months later.

<sup>2</sup> The use of this word at this time antedates by several months the earliest occurrence hitherto noted by historians.



## CHAPTER IV

### UPTON'S HILL

THE commission as brigadier-general of volunteers offered to Wadsworth he was at first inclined to refuse, for his brief military experience had made him less willing in August to accept a position of that rank than he had been in May to receive a major-generalship at the hands of Governor Morgan. But his friends on McDowell's staff, whose admiration he had won by zeal as a worker and by courage and leadership on the field of battle, were urgent that he should take the place, and he was assured that a graduate of West Point would be assigned to duty as adjutant-general of the brigade which he would command.<sup>1</sup> With this understanding he accepted the offer, and a commission was issued to him bearing the date of August 9. He was presently assigned to a brigade composed of the Twelfth, Twenty-first, Twenty-third, and Thirty-fifth New York regiments, with head-quarters at Arlington.<sup>2</sup> In the organization of his staff he was not able, after all, to obtain as adjutant-general the promised West Pointer, for the War Department had put a close restriction on details of officers away from their commands in the regular army; but when Lieutenant John A. Kress, who had been three years at the military academy, became one of his aides, he had no reason for regret on that score. He also found a place on his staff for his second son, Craig, who was twenty years old.

The fruits of the lesson of Bull Run were already be-

<sup>1</sup> Letter of Brigadier-General John A. Kress, U. S. A. (retired).

<sup>2</sup> The composition of the brigade was subsequently changed by the withdrawal of the 12th N. Y. and the addition of the 20th N. Y.



ginning to appear; the cry of "On to Richmond!" had given place to the watchword of "organization," and with a submission almost pathetic the chastened North waited upon the word of McClellan, the young major-general whose early successes and personal popularity were regarded as omens full of hope for the future. McDowell, accepting his defeat with the philosophy of a good soldier, had been willing to serve as division commander under his junior, and the assignment of Wadsworth's brigade to his division was a welcome arrangement to both men.

Drill now was the order of the day, though from all the commands large detachments were made for work on the defences of Washington. Necessary as the construction of these fortifications was—for the outposts of the enemy were at Munson's and Upton's Hills,<sup>1</sup> four miles from Arlington—the troops little relished what seemed to them preparations for a defensive campaign. In spite of all Wadsworth's efforts, the ardor of his pickets frequently got them into skirmishes with those of the enemy. That the "rebel flag" should be allowed to remain flying within six miles of Washington and in full view from the dome of the Capitol was an indignity under which not only the army, but the whole North chafed.

A letter from Craig to his mother gives a glimpse of camp life at Arlington late in September:

I am safely installed in the office of aide to the General. I hold a Second Lieutenant's commission in Kerigan's Irish regiment. I am to be transferred to the Thirty-Fifth regiment in a few days and expect to rank better. I sign my name with A. D. C. added about sixty times a day—you have no *idea how nice it looks*. McClellan reviewed McDowell's division on Monday last. He said it was the most satisfactory review he

<sup>1</sup> For places referred to from this point in the narrative to the battle of Gettysburg, consult the general map at the end of the volume.





BREVET MAJOR CHARLES F. WADSWORTH.



BREVET COLONEL CRAIG W. WADSWORTH.



BREVET MAJOR JAMES W. WADSWORTH.



BREVET MAJOR MONTGOMERY RITCHIE.

SONS AND SON-IN-LAW OF JAMES S. WADSWORTH.



had had during the campaign. I suppose it was all owing to my military knowledge. Father is not as stout as when he was in New York, but notwithstanding I never saw him looking better. It is all bone and muscle now. We have the front this week, but there is nothing doing, there have been only two or three shots in the last forty-eight hours. . . .

The proximity of the enemy to Washington which had continued through September was at last brought to an end, though not by any effort of McClellan's. It was his opponent, Joseph E. Johnston, who, seeing that the Confederate army was not then and was not likely to be in condition to undertake offensive operations, gave the order for the outposts to retire from their advanced position. On September 28 Wadsworth's pickets reported that the force at Munson's Hill was withdrawing. Setting out at once with two companies on a reconnaissance, Wadsworth found Munson's Hill and also Upton's Hill, a little under a mile to the north, abandoned, except for a small detachment of cavalry which retired on his approach. The stove-pipe on wheels and the pump-logs doing duty as cannon which were found there were probably indicative not so much of the poverty of the Confederates in artillery as of their love for a joke. In the evening of the same day Wadsworth was ordered to move his brigade thither; and here, where the Union line was farthest advanced toward the enemy, he and his men were stationed for the next five months. The well-built Virginia farm-house on the hill, belonging to Charles H. Upton, Wadsworth occupied as his head-quarters.<sup>1</sup> Colonel Regis de Trobriand, commander of the New York Fifty-fifth, having ridden out to Upton's Hill the day after Wadsworth's command took possession, described the scene there as follows:

<sup>1</sup> Upton had remained loyal to the Federal government. He claimed election as representative from the Alexandria district to the existing Congress, but as the election had taken place in May, 1861, after Virginia had seceded, the House refused to seat him.

I found General Wadsworth under the roof of the pillaged farmhouse. . . . A few broken stools were all there was left of the furniture. Some doors taken off their hinges served for tables; some boards picked up in the garden answered for benches. The Confederates, who were still occupying the house the day before, had written their names with charcoal upon the defaced walls of all the rooms. They had added, after the manner of soldiers, rough sketches, among which the favorite was the hanging of Mr. Lincoln. An alteration in the explanatory legend was all that was needed to turn the picture into the hanging of Mr. Jefferson Davis, and this our soldiers did not fail to do.

The house was surmounted by a sort of observatory, from which one saw in all its details a scene of the most varied character. About the premises stacks of arms, surrounded by soldiers lying on the ground or digging in the vegetable garden; regiments successively taking their positions in line; a dozen cannon in battery, the cannoneers at their guns watching the valley, the officers sweeping with their field glasses the wooded horizon, the caissons in the rear, the teams on the inner slopes of the hill. In front, the Leesburg Road, upon which galloped here and there staff officers followed by their orderlies, and the isolated hillock called Munson's Hill, from the top of which already floated the Federal flag.<sup>1</sup>

To the task of making this post a secure point for defence Wadsworth at once devoted himself. Besides strengthening the works on the hill, he sent the axemen out to fell the trees along the front so that there would be less chance for the enemy to approach unseen and greater opportunity for the use of artillery. The management of such pioneer tasks was a matter of course to him, and the speed with which his men did their work elicited the public praise of McClellan.<sup>2</sup> It was no less characteristic of Wadsworth that, though the needs of the camp required every stick of wood possible,

<sup>1</sup> *Quatre Ans de Campagnes à l'Armée du Potomac*, I, 106, 107.

<sup>2</sup> *Campfires of the 23rd N. Y.*, p. 34.

he would not suffer the axe to be laid to any of the oaks and chestnuts that immediately surrounded the Upton house.

During the next weeks many other visitors followed Colonel de Trobriand to the house at Upton's. Before the brigade had been in camp a fortnight, Russell, in quest of copy for the *Times*, arrived, lunched with Wadsworth on camp fare, and then from the lookout surveyed the "fine view, this bright, cold, clear autumn day, of the wonderful expanse of undulating forest lands streaked by rows of tents which at last concentrated into vast white patches in the distance towards Alexandria."<sup>1</sup> With an eye by no means friendly to the North, he noted that "the country is desolate but the camps are flourishing, and that is enough to satisfy most patriots bent on the subjugation of their enemies." Among the visitors was Mrs. Wadsworth, and as a result of her housewife's inspection of the premises there presently arrived sundry supplies contributing to the comfort of her husband and her son.

Early in November Wadsworth's brigade was strengthened by the arrival of the Ulster Guard. This regiment, which as the Twentieth New York State Militia he had in May vainly urged to enlist for two years, had now been reorganized as the Eightieth New York Volunteers, though it was familiarly known by its numerical designation in the State force. The story of its arrival at night at Upton's Hill, as told by the lieutenant-colonel, Theodore Gates, and his characterization of Wadsworth, give details that make vivid the camp life of these months:

Officers and men were glad to hear the command "halt!" for the march had been a long and fatiguing one, and they were tired, hungry, and thirsty. Not one of us knew anything about the commander into whose hands we had just fallen, and the locality was a perfect *terra incognita* to all of us. We knew we had reached

<sup>1</sup> Russell's Diary, II, 375.

our destination, because we were halted by a guard drawn up across the road in front of us, and an officer directed us to file to the left, into an open field, and bivouac. We marched into the field, and went to work in the darkness to make ourselves as comfortable as possible, but the command was by no means in an amiable mood. Each officer and man knew we had marched fifteen miles to reach a point less than eight from our starting place, and that there were two routes no more than half as far as the one we had been required to take, and the consequence was we had arrived at our destination too late to cook coffee or make any arrangements for a comfortable night's rest.

But this feeling underwent a very sudden and unexpected change. Lanterns were seen approaching from what appeared to be a house, a few hundred feet west of us, and a kind, cheery voice called out, "Twentieth, where are you?" The interlocutor was Brigadier-General James S. Wadsworth, who captured the affections of the entire command by his evident anxiety for their comfort and by the practical way in which he manifested it. He had the men supplied with fuel, and the whole regiment was furnished with an abundance of splendid hot coffee which he had had prepared for it as soon as its approach was announced at his headquarters. He did not turn this good work over to some of [his] subordinate officers and get back into his comfortable house, out of the chill November air, but he personally superintended it, and left only when he was assured the men were properly provided for; many a poor fellow went to sleep that night blessing General Wadsworth, and congratulating himself that his regiment had been assigned to his brigade.

This example of consideration for the men over whom he was placed was by no means exceptional. He was the commander not only, but he was also the watchful friend of the officers and men in his brigade. There was no matter too trivial for his ready personal attention, if it concerned the health or comfort of his men. The guard-house, the kitchens, the sinks, the stables: all were frequently subjected to his inspection and required to be kept in the cleanest and best possible condition. The writer of this has been aroused by General Wads-

worth at four o'clock of a winter's morning and requested to accompany him in a tour of the camp to see if the men's huts were properly warmed and ventilated, and many a soldier of the Twentieth was surprised on being awakened in the short hours of the morning at seeing his gray-headed Brigade-Commander and his Lieutenant-Colonel inspecting his stove and chimney and sniffing the air of his hut, as though they suspected he had the choicest stores of the commissary and quartermaster's departments hidden away in the capacious recesses of his eight by ten palace. General Wadsworth would stand in the snow and mud for hours at a time instructing the men how to build rude fireplaces and chimneys, and he was especially exacting in regard to the stables. He was a lover of good horses, and he believed the brute deserved a good dwelling-place, and that he should be well fed and kindly treated.<sup>1</sup>

Such a description indicates, as well as anything can, not only the responsibilities but also the opportunities of a general officer of volunteers at the beginning of the war. In view of the fact that there were many volunteer officers who to inexperience added incapacity, one is likely to dwell on the superior fitness of the trained officers of the regular army and, as is so often done, to condemn the Federal and State authorities for putting political ahead of military considerations in their appointments. This criticism, however, ignores the plain facts of the case. The number of men professionally trained for war—small at best, and diminished by the withdrawal from the regular army of those who entered the Confederate service—was hopelessly inadequate to fill the positions required in the vast body of troops which the North was raising. Volunteer officers were therefore a plain necessity. But this was not the whole story. The Northern soldier who enlisted in 1861 and 1862 was a self-reliant, intelligent citizen and patriot. The only power to which he was accustomed to yield

<sup>1</sup> The Ulster Guard and the War of the Rebellion, pp. 153, 154.



obedience was the law which he as a voter had had a chance in making. In this respect he resembled the patriot soldier of the early part of the French Revolution, who considered the title *citoyen* to confer every bit as much authority as the titles which his officers held. His attitude toward his commanders was one of friendly co-operation, and in this attitude he expected them to acquiesce. On New Year's day, 1862, the celebration devised by one of Wadsworth's regiments consisted in the temporary abdication of the officers, their places being taken by men elected from the ranks, who made their superiors the camp Gibeonites, hewers of wood and drawers of water for the day.<sup>1</sup>

Clearly, to win the reluctant footsteps of such "sovereigns in uniform" along the hard road of instinctive and instantaneous obedience—the first duty of a soldier—the skill of an officer of their own antecedents was often of more avail than that of a military precisian. Of course, not every officer from civil life possessed this skill; but wherever was found a man who had the gift of leadership, it usually proved that in camp, on the march, and on the field of battle his power of personal ascendancy formed the basis of the discipline which his men acquired. And if such an officer showed himself earnest in purpose and brave in fight there was no feat of endurance or courage to which he could not command them.

Such considerations by no means leave out of account the fact that there were volunteer officers who were not only a weakness but a disgrace to the army, but it must be remembered that the chief cause of their inferiority was one that was common to a large number of the officers of the regular army. Jealousies, bickerings, insubordination, magnifying of self were human failings that distracted the Army of the Potomac for the first three years of the war. An officer could rise

<sup>1</sup> Chronicles of the 21st N. Y., p. 140.



above such failings and sink self in service not by virtue of his previous military experience but by virtue of the stuff of manliness and patriotism that was in him. This fact the American volunteer, with his keen native wit, instantly recognized, and on this recognition he based his conduct.

The bearing of all this in Wadsworth's case may be summed up in the words of one of his staff. He had, says General Kress,<sup>1</sup> "a serious appreciation of his lack of education and training in the details of military affairs, a deficiency for which I claim his good judgment, energy, sound common sense, the esteem and regard of all under his command which he invariably acquired, his adaptability, and his quiet, matchless bravery were ample offsets; military details are not so difficult to acquire; he would soon have mastered the essentials. I doubt if any more appropriate appointment to the grade had been made at that time."

Thus it was that Wadsworth from the first won regard and obedience from the men in his brigade. Moreover, the practical instinct which led him to have a supply of hot coffee ready for the cold and weary Twentieth is only one out of a hundred instances of the way in which the long habit of out-of-doors life and the traditions of pioneering had taught him the right thing to do for the comfort of man and beast exposed to the elements. Another case is that of his ordering at his own expense a large supply of gloves from Gloversville for the benefit of men on picket duty. The long habit of generosity, too, is of course accountable for this; but such favors carried with them no demoralization. The men took them in the spirit in which they were given, not as evidences of wealth or of a desire to curry favor, but as showing a generous solicitude to provide for his soldiers that degree of comfort necessary to their efficiency.

When the men of Wadsworth's brigade prided them-

<sup>1</sup> In a private letter.

selves on their good fortune in having as commander a man of means, they also did not fail to note that he was careful to make no ostentatious display in his own way of life. It was not uncommon for the commander of a regiment or brigade to show his sense of a recent rise in social importance by entertaining guests at his head-quarters with champagne. The "camp fare" on which Russell dined at Upton's Hill and on the plainness of which he for once did not comment unfavorably, in his usual gourmand's fashion, was but an example of Wadsworth's gift for keeping in touch with his men by living with them the life of a soldier.

The current newspaper phrase of these months, "All quiet along the Potomac"—a watchword which came to have a sharp edge of irony as the season wore on—was by no means true of Wadsworth's command and the adjoining brigades along the line of the advance. The country between the Federal pickets stationed three miles in advance of Upton's Hill and the Confederate pickets at Fairfax Court House abounded in woodlands and offered many opportunities for the detachments of Stuart's cavalry which infested it to operate secretly against the Federals. The region had, of course, suffered from the devastations of both armies, and on many of the farms the buildings were either burnt to the ground or else abandoned; but where white inhabitants remained they were, with few exceptions, of Southern sympathies and, in effect, spies upon the movements of the Federals. As for the negroes, the instinct of loyalty to their masters still persisted in enough cases to render their childlike curiosity concerning the Northern troops a matter of decidedly ambiguous intention. All these advantages the dashing Stuart knew how to put to good use.

Another circumstance that contributed to make Wadsworth anxious about his picket line was the fact that as yet the Yankee volunteer approximated the con-

dition of a soldier only in external aspect. In outpost duty the regiments took turns, marching from camp with a supply of "cooked rations," and serving for forty-eight hours. Although the men when on duty were no longer so green that they could be led by the tinkle of a cow-bell in search of fresh milk only to walk into a Confederate ambush, still the sight of one of the lean pigs that ran wild in the woods was often too great a temptation to a hungry man; and it was common knowledge that the picket-firing, strictly forbidden except in case of alarm, was likely to be directed at a four-legged rather than a two-legged victim. It is no wonder, therefore, that Wadsworth should have had very much on his mind the fortunes of whatever regiment was doing picket duty, or that he should have ridden nearly every day to Falls Church, just inside the Federal lines, to consult with its commanding officer and also, it must be admitted, to do a little reconnoitring on his own account. If in this practice he calls to mind Washington and Lafayette similarly occupied at Wilmington, it is only another point in the resemblance, already suggested, between Wadsworth and the fighters of the Revolutionary era.

A still further incentive to Wadsworth in making these reconnoissances was the hope of finding forage at some farm between the lines, for with navigation on the Potomac blocked by Confederate batteries and the single-track railroad between Washington and Baltimore taxed far beyond its powers of performance, the problem of providing fodder for the horses in the army was rapidly becoming critical.<sup>1</sup> The zeal with which he set about scouring the country for provender brought him on one occasion into closer quarters with the enemy than he had bargained for. On the morning of Novem-

<sup>1</sup> According to the report of the chief quartermaster of the Army of the Potomac, four hundred tons of forage were required daily.—(W. R., XI, pt. 1, p. 157.)

ber 8 he had set out on this quest, accompanied by two privates, and his search had carried him to a farm a mile or more beyond the lines. Here, having dismounted at noon to eat his lunch, he suddenly spied a squad of Confederate cavalry rapidly approaching. He himself had time to get to horse and make good his escape; the two privates, who had accepted an invitation to take their meal inside the house, were captured.<sup>1</sup>

Though after this incident Wadsworth restricted somewhat the range of his own reconnoitring, the warning of the adventure was lost on a foraging expedition that set forth a few days later from the other brigade stationed at Upton's Hill. A train of six wagons with teamsters and men to do the loading and an escort of fifty soldiers started on November 16 for Doolan's farm, which was some distance beyond the place where Wadsworth had had his narrow escape. While filling their wagons they kept due watch, but when at noon the negroes about the place offered them the unwonted delicacies of hoe-cake and milk the hungry and guileless soldiers, taking the bait, gathered about the house, intent on nothing but their dinners. Meanwhile a messenger betook himself to the next farm where some sixty cavalry of a Mississippi regiment were in hiding. Soon the care-free Northerners were disturbed in their hour of ease, and, after an interval during which the farm premises were the scene of what was more a scramble than a skirmish, the Mississippians retired from the field of action, having in their possession over thirty shamefaced New Yorkers and their muskets, five new army wagons, twenty valuable horses, and "one hundred and twenty bushels of excellent corn, ready shucked and in the wagons."<sup>2</sup> Such was the happy-go-lucky volunteer of 1861.

The result of these two successes was to embolden the Confederates to a deed of greater daring. On No-

<sup>1</sup> 108 W. R., p. 379.

<sup>2</sup> 5 W. R., p. 440.

vember 15 Beauregard sent to Johnston a clipping from a Baltimore newspaper detailing the incident in which Wadsworth, for the first and only time in his life, showed a clean pair of heels to the enemy;<sup>1</sup> three days later, acting on the hint thus given, Lieutenant-Colonel Fitzhugh Lee, with a detachment of the First Virginia Cavalry, set out in the direction of the Union line in front of Upton's Hill "for the purpose," as the Confederate commander said in his report, "of obtaining valuable information." His plan was probably to break through the pickets with a dash and push toward Falls Church at the hour at which Wadsworth was accustomed to make his afternoon round. Lee succeeded in getting three or four hundred yards within the Union lines; but, unfortunately for him and quite contrary to his expectation, the reserve companies of the regiment on picket,<sup>2</sup> which happened to be close at hand and in command of an officer with a cool head, were marched forward and from the shelter of a thicket poured a sharp fire on the Confederates. For a few moments there was hot work, Lee's opponents, greatly to his surprise, fighting "with much more bravery than the Federal troops usually exhibit." Then, since there was no longer hope of catching the Yankee brigadier on that day, Lee, taking his wounded and his prisoners, retired slowly to camp.<sup>3</sup>

Such brushes as these, though productive of greater watchfulness, did not cause Wadsworth to abandon his determination to obtain forage wherever it could be found outside the lines. In the course of the winter

<sup>1</sup> 108 W. R., p. 379.

<sup>2</sup> The 84th New York, commonly known as the 14th Brooklyn. It was not at the time in Wadsworth's brigade, though in 1863 it formed a portion of his command.

<sup>3</sup> See the reports of the respective commanders in each of which the object of the raid is hinted at (5 W. R., pp. 441, 442). W. M. Campbell, one of the captured, was brought the next day before Generals Johnston, Beauregard, G. W. Smith, and Stuart, and Colonel Fitzhugh Lee, and the inquiries put to him by them disclosed the purpose of the raid.—(Letter of W. M. Campbell to J. W. Wadsworth.)

four or five expeditions, managed with circumspection and sufficient escort, were uniformly successful, and Wadsworth reported that on each occasion they brought in from fifty to a hundred wagon-loads of forage, whereby the needs of McDowell's division were greatly relieved. During the whole season the only loss suffered by his command at the hands of the enemy was that of the two unwary privates who put their faith in the hospitality of a Virginia farmer.<sup>1</sup>

If this narrative of the unpretentious military exploits of a general of volunteers tend to provoke a smile, let it be remembered that the point of the story is not to make a hero out of a modest country gentleman but to show in what fashion a man of aptitude in affairs brought over into his new profession of arms the experience gained in civil life. In applying to himself the standard of duty to which he held up the enlisted men under him, Wadsworth showed a sense of dignity different at least from that of the general officers whose presence in force on Pennsylvania Avenue, the *Via Sacra* of the capital, was a subject of derisive jest. A stone, so one story ran, thrown at a dog there glanced from its intended victim and hit two brigadier-generals. From such dangers Wadsworth at Upton's Hill was exempt.

In still another respect the experience and convictions of Wadsworth's civil life came into play in this new field. It was quite a matter of course for him to regard the inhabitants of the region under his command much as he had always regarded the tenants on his estates, and to deem a concern for their welfare as within the scope of his duty. How naturally and how actively he carried out this conception was described some months later by Upton, who reoccupied his house after the Army of the Potomac had taken the field.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> General Wadsworth's report to the War Department of his military career. Original in the possession of J. W. Wadsworth.

<sup>2</sup> Letter in the *New York Tribune*, October 24, 1862.



While in command at this post, where he [Wadsworth] had a most difficult and trying task to perform, he exhibited so much wisdom, and tempered the firmness of his command with so much kindness and forbearance, that he won the confidence and respect of the citizens of Fairfax, and I have heard some of them, who were among the bitterest rebels, express feelings of respect, and even affection, for him, which no subsequent events of this wretched rebellion are likely to efface. . . . When the rebels fell back there went with them a good many men from my neighborhood who were ignorant and deluded as to the cause of the war, and the true character of the "Yankees and Lincolnites," but who had never taken up arms; some of these left destitute families behind them, and there were then—as, alas! there will be this coming winter—many cases of sickness and destitution among women and children. These cases General Wadsworth inquired into and relieved so far as possible; to give two instances out of many which might be related: one man left a wife and ten children; the mother was taken sick and the children were starving; General Wadsworth sent flour and provisions from his own stores to this family and contrived to get word of invitation beyond our lines to the father to return home, which he did in time to soothe the last hours of his dying wife and parent; this man has been ever since at home and is a good, industrious farmer. Another case was that of a man who had been violent in denouncing all Yankees (but who speaks now in the warmest praise of General Wadsworth), who had fled without other cause than a conscious complicity with the rebels, and whose wife was near her confinement, while his aged mother was on her death-bed. General Wadsworth sent for him also in time to assuage the distress of his family. . . . Indeed, so thoroughly did he enter into the duties of his position, I verily believe he is better acquainted at this moment with the personnel of Fairfax County than I, who have lived there nearly thirty years. . . .

No less under his care did Wadsworth consider the slave population of the region, and his efforts at this time in their behalf proved an introduction to more im-

portant work that he was to do later. In many cases, where the negroes had been abandoned by their masters, their condition was peculiarly forlorn, and his sympathy was quick to respond to the plight of the poor wretches whose state, according to his conviction, was the cause of the war, and to do for them what little there was that could be done. "My dear Sumner," he wrote on December 31: "There are three or four families here of slaves—practically emancipated—which I wish to get to the North, at least as far as Philadelphia. They are mostly women and children. How can I get papers for them through Baltimore? Please make inquiries and advise me."

Another instance of Wadsworth's concern for the negroes is given in the story told by an officer whom he sent out to a house near the picket line, where, he had been informed, lay the body of an old man who had been the slave of an acquaintance of former days. "The house, on reaching it," wrote the officer, "I found occupied by a party of the Harris Light Cavalry, commanded by Major Gregory, who, on learning the General's wish, promptly furnished men for the requisite service. An old colored woman, the wife of the deceased, was the only person of her race present—a meek, subdued old soul—who, in answer to my questions about her family, said, in broken accents, that her three children, her only ones, had been sold into the Carolinas while yet very young, and that she had never seen or heard of them since. If these were alive they were her only living kin, and she was now alone in the world. We gave the old man a decorous Christian burial, and I stated what I had seen and heard to General Wadsworth on my return. The recital moved him deeply, and he expressed himself with indignant energy on the abominations of a system which laughs at the rights of parents, and by tearing apart families at pleasure and for gain violates the most sacred ties and affections."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Unidentified newspaper clipping.



Though such an instance is highly characteristic of the first contact of one type of Northerner with the system of slavery, there was many another officer in the Army of the Potomac whom the application of the touchstone showed to be of quite different quality. If negroes, seeking with the instinct of freedom what they deemed the refuge of the Union army, came within the lines at a point where one of these men held high command, they soon discovered their mistake. They were seized as fugitive slaves, and United States volunteers were used to return them to their masters, though when, as often happened, the owners also were fugitives, the attempt to do so was not attended with success. Negroes who made their way to the outposts in front of Upton's Hill received, it is needless to say, treatment of another sort. Every such case was, by Wadsworth's orders, brought directly to him, and before the interview was ended he had provided as best he could for the fugitive's wants, giving him work about the camp when possible, or sending him on to Washington. But first he plied him with questions as to what he knew of the number and position of the Confederate forces at Centreville and Manassas. In the information derived from repeated inquiries of this kind Wadsworth put considerable confidence, and though this confidence was not shared by many officers of higher rank, in the end, when the question of the size of the force that had been confronting the Army of the Potomac all winter was a matter of general concern, it was proved that Wadsworth's judgment was not mistaken.

The year 1861 drew to a close and the Army of the Potomac had still taken no advantage of the Indian summer which delayed so long amid the woodlands of Virginia. To Lincoln and the officers coming in contact with McClellan the reason why was beginning to be apparent, for they had already had cognizance of

those qualities in the general-in-chief which made him so difficult either to command or to obey. "Surrounded for the most part by young officers," says the Comte de Paris, who was then serving on McClellan's staff<sup>1</sup> and who has been one of his most lenient critics, "he was himself the most youthful of us all, not only by reason of his physical vigor, the vivacity of his impressions, the noble candor of his character, and his glowing patriotism, but also, I may add, by his inexperience of men."<sup>2</sup> Difficulties with a valetudinarian such as General Winfield Scott could perhaps be pardoned to the "inexperience of men" of any commander; but McClellan's persistent and contemptuous stand-off attitude toward "browsing presidents" showed this inexperience to consist in part of the Bourbonism which learns nothing and forgets nothing.

The tactlessness of a man who could thus deal with his superiors naturally displayed itself also in his handling of his division commanders, among whom the positive and able McDowell was soon in disfavor. Of these facts the Northern public was naturally ignorant; had it possessed them its murmurs would have been louder and more menacing than they were. Congress, however, assembling early in December, was quick both to sense the situation and to act, appointing a committee on the conduct of the war with powers for gaining information at first hand. "Endeavoring," in the words of its chairman, Senator Wade, "to see if there is any way in God's world to get rid of the capital besieged, while Europe is looking down upon us as almost a conquered people,"<sup>3</sup> it summoned to its sessions as witnesses one general after another from the Army of the Potomac. Wadsworth, as it chanced, was the fifth person to appear before it, giving his testimony on December 26, 1861.

<sup>1</sup> His younger brother, the Duc de Chartres, held a similar position.

<sup>2</sup> Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, II, 112.

<sup>3</sup> C. W., pt. 1, p. 140.



T. R. H. THE COMTE DE PARIS AND THE  
DUC DE CHARTRES.

The Orleans Princes who Served on General  
McClellan's Staff.



From McDowell, who preceded Wadsworth as a witness, the committee had obtained his views touching the importance of an advance toward the enemy at Manassas and Centreville. To Wadsworth they now put questions on the subjects as to which they were most concerned: whether McClellan had called his division commanders to council; whether the condition of the roads was favorable to a forward movement; whether the divisions of the army should not be organized into army corps; whether the cavalry was not in excessive proportion; whether he, Wadsworth, returned fugitive slaves to their owners. In fact, he was asked to answer any sort of military question that might suggest itself to the inconsequent and non-military mind of a congressman sitting in committee. Such of these queries as related to matters of fact he answered with frankness; to such as dealt with matters of opinion he replied with discretion. His testimony on two important points is here given. As to his ways of getting information concerning the strength of the enemy, he said:

The sources of supply that were open to us, until within a very few days, were these: runaway negroes coming in our lines, deserters coming in, and prisoners taken from the enemy; likewise the information collected by scouts, who go out, but do not go exactly within the lines of the enemy—or not very much within their lines—very slightly. . . . I have scouts who go out, for instance, to Fairfax Court House; there are a number of Union men near Fairfax Court House with whom these scouts communicate, and also some intelligent negroes. From these various sources a great deal of information is obtained. It is reliable as far as it goes, but it is not definite enough. The way in which we get at the numbers of the enemy from such sources is by endeavoring to ascertain the number of their camps, the number of their regiments, and then we multiply that by what we suppose to be the average force of their regiments. We have several times had parties come in who would tell us how many camps there were,

for instance, at Fairfax Court House; how many at Centreville; and, not so definitely, but approximately, the number at Manassas. In that way we have had some materials for getting an estimate of their strength. But latterly an order has been issued prohibiting the commanders in front from examining these parties as they came in. We are now obliged to send them to headquarters. That order took effect two or three weeks ago, and we now send them in without examination to any great extent. I know that General McDowell told me it would not be a breach of the order to examine them sufficiently for us to know whether the enemy were going to attack us at once. Then there have been restrictions placed upon the movements of these scouts. There is difficulty in getting passes through the lines; so that within two or three weeks we have not had so much information as previously. I do not know the object of it. . . .

As to the effect on the men of inaction, he said:

The troops are still in very good spirits. They have not abandoned the idea of active service this winter; but I think if it should become generally understood in the army that we are not to have any active service this winter, it would be almost impossible to keep the volunteers here. The volunteers, as I know to be the case with those from New York, embrace a great many men of intelligence and property. Many have left their families under circumstances of a great deal of anxiety and have come here from patriotic motives. If it was understood that they were going into winter quarters, it would be almost impossible to keep them here at all. The applications for furloughs are now ten times what they were in the summer. The men want to go home and see their families, as they are doing nothing here. Our time is largely occupied by these applications, which are very pressing.

*Question.* I will ask you whether, in your judgment, your men would be improved by the experience they would obtain by remaining in camp during all winter?

*Wadsworth.* I do not think they would. The winter

is very unfavorable for drilling. . . . I do not think the men would be better in the spring under any circumstances, even if they were in good spirits. The officers of the line might be improved if they had efficient working commanders who would compel them to study, and who would drill them themselves at officers' drill. . . .

*Question.* Is it your opinion that a movement should be made?

*Wadsworth.* It seems almost presumptuous for me to give an opinion upon that question. But as you ask me, I will answer you. It seems to me that there is no doubt about it: that we must, beyond all question, make a movement. I think we are largely superior to our enemies in numbers, and we have a vast superiority in artillery. . . . They are brave men, and ardent in their cause; they fight very well when we meet them. . . . From what I have seen of them, however, I am sure we are superior to them in discipline.

*Question.* How are they off for clothing, so far as you have been able to learn from their prisoners?

*Wadsworth.* Very badly off. We get very reliable accounts in that respect from negroes and from citizens who have seen them. There are citizens near Fairfax Court House who see their troops there, but are not allowed to go to Centreville or Manassas. The enemy takes very extraordinary precautions to prevent us from learning their numbers. And if any citizen goes to Centreville or Manassas he is kept there, and not allowed to return. But these citizens see detachments of their troops. A man by the name of Webster, living a little way out of Fairfax Court House, saw some regiments pass his house, and he gives a very reliable account of their condition as to clothing.<sup>1</sup>

The period when the committee of Congress was entering upon its labors, patriotic but nevertheless subversive of military propriety and discipline, marked also the beginning of one of the most poignantly distressing situations of the war in its exhibition of men at cross-purposes, of incompatibility of temperaments. A day or two before Christmas McClellan fell ill. Refusing to

<sup>1</sup> C. W., pt. 1, pp. 147-149.

relinquish his command temporarily, he kept everything at a stand-still at precisely the moment when further inaction had become insupportable. Lincoln, expressing the wish to "borrow" the army for a while, called McDowell and Franklin, another of McClellan's division commanders, into council with some of the members of the cabinet, and the body thus casually constituted undertook first to inform itself as to the internal condition of the army and then to plan a campaign which should satisfy the impatience of the North for action. Nothing shows better the desperateness of the situation than the fact that men of sense should undertake to co-operate in this fatuous fashion. Though the conference seems to have wonderfully accelerated McClellan's recovery, the deadlock continued. Unfortunately for him, his inaction, combined with the ungracious treatment of his generals already referred to, had spread demoralization among them. The testimony of the officers, except Fitz-John Porter, called before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, goes far to prove this; if further evidence were needed it could be found in a letter written by Wadsworth to Sumner on January 10, the day of Lincoln's first conference with McDowell and Franklin.

UPTON'S HILL, *January 10, 1862.*

MY DEAR SUMNER:—

I have just received your note. There are no signs of a fight or a move. The Adjutant-General of General McClellan told one of my staff that the country ought to be satisfied that the Capital had been protected, and that he did not think an onward move could be made.

In my judgment the policy of sending expeditions to attack the enemy at unguarded points while he comes up and offers us battle in sight of our Capital which we decline is a pusillanimous, cowardly one. The army is as much depressed and discouraged as the monied interest. The despondency and disgust is almost universal. Starting with a prosperous and patriotic North



we have reached bankruptcy and got seven miles into Virginia.<sup>1</sup> I tell you confidentially but advisedly that the army has lost confidence in its commander. It never had any, nor had anyone else, in the Secretary of War. Our only hope now is in the Legislative branch. If you are competent to the crisis you may save the country; but you must do it soon or be too late.

It is difficult for me to leave my command and come to Washington, though I have been in for a few hours at a time occasionally. I wish you would make up a party and come out and dine with me. Send me word if you can by the Military Telegraph from [the] War Office and I will be at home. I should be very much gratified if I could have an hour's conversation with a few influential gentlemen in the Senate. I should like to meet Mr. Fessenden and Mr. Grimes. Can you manage this for me? You see that I write you with great frankness. My apology will be found in the desperate condition of our affairs. I do not aspire to discuss the great problems before you, but to let you know the condition and feeling of the army.

Very sincerely yours,

JAS. S. WADSWORTH.

It was from the executive, nevertheless, that the first ray of hope came. Remove McClellan Lincoln could not, for there was no one commanding the confidence of the country who could be put in his place; but on the very day after Wadsworth's letter was written Cameron was displaced, and on January 13 Edwin M. Stanton was appointed to succeed him. This was almost the first act of Lincoln's to reveal the quality of leadership which the stern discipline of the national crisis was slowly developing within him. Conscious of the train of blunders into which his administrative inexperience

<sup>1</sup>The financial measures adopted by Congress in the summer of 1861 had proved inadequate, and the United States Treasury was nearly empty. "Saturday night, December 28, 1861, the managers of the New York banks, after a meeting of six hours, decided that they must suspend specie payments. Gold soon brought a slight premium."—(Rhodes, *History of the U. S.*, III, 561.)

and insecurity had led him, he had now, at the long last, turned into the upward path. His genius consisted not a little in his power to grow from weakness to strength, and with this deed of courage he fitly began the great year of Emancipation.

The appointment of Stanton, however, had little effect upon the immediate fortunes of the Army of the Potomac except to strengthen in the cabinet the hostility to McClellan. Meanwhile the unseemly tussle between the President and the commander of the armies went on. The long arguments between them as to the best route for the advance of the Army of the Potomac—whether it should be directly against the Confederate army at Manassas, or, by a change of base, against Richmond up one of the rivers flowing into Chesapeake Bay—have no place here. With a point at issue, however, which later became acute, Wadsworth had a direct concern. It was one of McClellan's failings as a commander that his sense of fact was always at the mercy of his imagination. His faculty for "realizing hallucinations,"<sup>1</sup> to use the phrase of Gurowski, the Thersites of Washington at this time, displayed itself nowhere more tryingly than in his estimate of the number of the enemy opposed to him in Virginia. He was convinced that his own army of over one hundred and fifty thousand was face to face with eighty thousand men at Manassas and Centreville, while the Confederate forces along the Potomac above and below Washington amounted to thirty-five thousand more.<sup>2</sup> His belief, based on the reports of Allen Pinkerton, the chief of his secret service, was proof against any evidence which made his foes less formidable in point of numbers. Wadsworth, on the other hand, relying on the means of information which he had indicated to the Committee on the Conduct of the War, had reached the conviction that the force about Manassas was between

<sup>1</sup> Gurowski's *Diary* from March, 1861, to Nov. 1862, p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> 5 W. R., p. 53.

forty thousand and fifty thousand men.<sup>1</sup> Growing surer of his figures as the weeks of the winter wore on, he took his evidence to McDowell, to McClellan, and even to Stanton. Though McClellan rejected it with a rudeness, so the story goes, surpassing his usual treatment of subordinates, on the Secretary of War the effect was of a different sort. The soldier before him, so clear as to his facts and pressing them home with all the personal force of a man accustomed to make his ideas tell upon his auditors, struck Stanton as a man who might be of service for other work in the combinations to be made in the near future.

These new combinations, representing the effort of the administration to put vigor into the conduct of the war, were the outcome of the appointment of Stanton, who, having now been in office for nearly two months and feeling himself firmly established, was beginning to manifest that relentless and unreasoning love of authority for which he was to become famous. A man of far greater executive force than Lincoln, a "worker of workers," in the phrase of Nicolay and Hay,<sup>2</sup> and also of far less personal tact and human understanding, he was soon at loggerheads with McClellan. Being both inexperienced and contemptuous as to military habits of thought and methods of procedure and having withal a consuming passion for action, he had come into the cabinet at just the moment when Lincoln was dallying with the idea of "borrowing" the Army of the Potomac. Impatient of all half-way measures, Stanton fell in readily with the President's scheme, which was in effect to ignore McClellan and to issue orders direct to the army

<sup>1</sup> Greeley's *American Conflict*, II, 212. Lossing, II, 355, 358, says that the estimate of General Wool at Fortress Monroe confirmed that of Wadsworth. It has been too often assumed that all the estimates given McClellan of the numbers of the Confederates were exaggerated. The truth is, he wilfully shut his eyes to the evidence that, if accepted, would condemn his inaction.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Lincoln*, V, 136.

himself. In defence of such a course, as green and artless as it was demoralizing and predestined to disaster, the only thing that can be urged is that no other was open. As has already been said, there was no available commander of sufficient achievement in whose favor McClellan could be relieved, and, this being the case, the way to make the best of a bad business seemed to be for the administration to assume such control as should prevent McClellan from having altogether his own wilful way. A forlorn hope, this, as the events of the past winter had already shown; but there was no hope elsewhere.

It was on Saturday, March 8, 1862, soon after McClellan had returned from the inglorious "lockjaw expedition" at Harper's Ferry,<sup>1</sup> that effective steps toward this singular arrangement were taken. While McClellan was taking counsel of his general officers, mostly division commanders, called together at Lincoln's direction to discuss the still unsettled question of the route to be taken against the enemy, Lincoln was preparing the President's General War Orders, numbered two and three, and bearing this same date.<sup>2</sup> By these orders McClellan was required to organize the part of the Army of the Potomac about to enter upon active operations into four corps, for the command of which the ranking division commanders, Major-General McDowell and Brigadier-Generals Sumner, Heintzelman, and Keyes, were designated. A fifth corps under Major-General N. P. Banks was to be formed of two divisions stationed near Harper's Ferry. At Washington was to be left a force sufficient in the estimation of McClellan and his corps

<sup>1</sup> McClellan had assembled a large number of boats in the canal opposite Harper's Ferry, to be used in making a bridge across the river, and had ordered a large force to rendezvous there. When, however, it was attempted to pass the boats through the lift lock it was found that they were some six inches too wide. Chase's *mot*, that the expedition died of lockjaw, spread rapidly in Washington.

<sup>2</sup> 5 W. R., pp. 18, 50.

commanders for its defence, and to the command of this force Wadsworth was assigned with the title of Military Governor of the District of Washington. The work thus begun without consultation with McClellan was continued—but by no means completed—by the President's War Order, No. 3, published three days later.<sup>1</sup> By its terms McClellan was relieved of his position of general-in-chief, his command being restricted to the Department of the Potomac; the troops in the West were constituted the Department of the Mississippi, under General Halleck; while the mountainous region of western Virginia, where there were almost no forces, Union or Confederate, was designated the Mountain Department, with Major-General John C. Frémont, recently returned in disgrace from Missouri, as its commander. All three commanders of departments were ordered to report directly to the Secretary of War.

This stripping of authority from McClellan, the prelude to a still more humiliating stripping of troops, he bore with fairly good grace, issuing without undue delay the necessary commands for the organization of his army into corps. Against the appointment of Wadsworth, however, he saw fit to protest. It was not strange that he should object to an arrangement by which a man wholly without technical training was to be put in command of the extensive fortifications about the city and of the troops necessary to man them. He must also have had some inkling of Wadsworth's personal hostility to him. But, on remonstrating with Stanton, he was told, as he declares, "that Wadsworth had been selected because it was necessary, for political reasons, to conciliate the agricultural interests of New York, and that it was useless to discuss the matter, because it would in no event be changed."<sup>2</sup> Whatever the rashness of Lincoln and Stanton in assigning Wadsworth to such a position, McClellan, as in the case of the corps commanders, had only his

<sup>1</sup> 5 W. R., p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> McClellan's Own Story, p. 226.

own dilatoriness to thank. His proposal that the place should be given to Brigadier-General W. B. Franklin, an excellent officer of the regular army, came too late and had the air of being merely an afterthought, a peg upon which he could hang his protest.

With regard to such appointments as those of Banks, Frémont, and Wadsworth, it must be remembered that, from one point of view, they represented for the month of March the balance of favors which Lincoln was continually trying to strike between the two wings of the Republican party. Throughout the winter the inactivity of the Army of the Potomac had been laid by the radical leaders to the conservative tendencies of McClellan and some of his generals. It was the men of anti-slavery sentiments who were spoiling for a fight, and their clamors kept the harassed President constantly between the devil and the deep sea. The coming of Stanton was a godsend to the party of action, and his falling out with McClellan a circumstance of which they made the most. The three military appointments in question were also read throughout the North as signs that the administration had set its steps resolutely forward, and the response desired by Lincoln came in renewed support from this section of the party.

It was considerations such as these, rather than the need of conciliating the agricultural interests in New York, that probably played a part in the choice of Wadsworth for the position of military governor of the capital. His inexperience as commander of an army of twenty-five thousand men within fortifications cannot be gainsaid; but Stanton, who was already expecting to bring to Washington Major-General E. A. Hitchcock, an army officer of long service and high standing, was doubtless trusting to him to make good Wadsworth's professional deficiencies.<sup>1</sup> In point of fact, the turn of circumstances, as will presently appear, ultimately relieved

<sup>1</sup> Fifty Years in Camp and Field, p. 437.



the volunteer officer of this larger responsibility. The true justification for his appointment, therefore, over and above his qualifications of general capacity and executive force, is to be found in the fact that the position was quasi-civil. The man who was to govern a place that was half city, half camp must use his military authority in such fashion that it should not confound the strength of the civil arm. In this respect the appointment of Wadsworth was as suitable in promise as it actually resulted in performance. The single instance in which, acting with Stanton's consent, he made his power paramount is the exception that proves the rule.

Saturday, March 8, the day on which Lincoln's two orders were issued, was the beginning of a week of memorable events, tumbling after one another in disordered sequence, kaleidoscopic in their bewildering combinations. To touch for a moment on things naval, it was the day when the iron-clad Merrimac dealt destruction among the wooden frigates at Hampton Roads. On the next day the iron-clad was checkmated by the Monitor in a combat which revolutionized warfare on sea for the whole world. On land, on this same Sunday, it became known that the Confederate pickets were being withdrawn from the lines which they had watched for five months. Wadsworth's outposts were among the first to make the discovery, and he telegraphed the fact to McClellan's head-quarters. Later in the evening his brigade received marching orders. Although the day before he had had word of Stanton's intention to appoint him military governor of Washington, the order assigning him to that duty had fortunately not been made out, and he was free to lead his men in the advance movement for which he had so long waited. An hour after midnight the sergeants went from tent to tent quietly arousing the men and bidding them prepare to start at five. "At four," according to the regimental narrative of the Twenty-first New York, "all were astir, bonfires

were lighted in the streets with the straw of our bunks and the remnant of firewood, and in their glare men hurried to and fro, securing the safety of whatever must be left behind, filling haversacks and canteens, and taking a last look at the old camp which had been the scene of so many long-to-be-remembered experiences.

"At five the bugle sounded, and the cry of 'Fall in!' echoed from street to street; the men hurried into their places, the line was formed, and just as daylight began to streak the east we joyously took up the march. The morning was damp, and the hill was enveloped in an ashy canopy of smoke through which the smouldering fires showed dimly as we turned away, wondering if we should ever see it again. On the march at last."<sup>1</sup>

That night Wadsworth's men, being the advance brigade of the army, encamped in a pine grove about two miles east of Centreville. There they tarried for five days, the men spending the time free from drill and camp duties in straying about the deserted Confederate camps and over the battle-field of Bull Run. There, too, Stanton's order of appointment reached Wadsworth, who made immediate preparation to return to Washington. The news of their loss spread rapidly among the regiments of the brigade, just returning from drill, and with the instinct of soldiers for an emotional moment they gathered about their commander to bid him farewell. The thronging adieus, inarticulate save for the repeated cries of "Good-by!" were gathered up for expression in the "Auld Lang Syne" which the band of the Twenty-first New York struck up as he left the camp.<sup>2</sup> His connection with the Army of the Potomac, beginning with its organization by McDowell, had lasted for nine months; another nine months was to pass before he saw service with it again.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Chronicles of the 21st N. Y., pp. 146, 147.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>3</sup> A few weeks after this leave-taking Wadsworth had occasion to visit his old brigade. "He was discovered and recognized by some of the men when half a mile away, and the cry was immediately raised, 'Waddy's coming!' 'Old Waddy's coming!' It ran rapidly along the line. Then a



Riding toward Washington over the same road that he had travelled alone after Bull Run, Wadsworth had opportunity to reflect upon the transition from the first to the second period of his military career. Keenly as he desired to lead his brigade in the coming campaign and there to justify his pride in its discipline, he was not insensible to the recognition by the administration of a greater power of service for him in another field. The very scope of opportunity in this command, the limits of which were still indeterminate in the minds of those who had created it, was an attraction to him. With no illusions as to his lack of military training for the command of a fortified city, and yet in true American fashion in no wise daunted thereby, he crossed the Potomac and entered the nation's capital, the governance of which was henceforth to be his care.

grand rush was made. Men jumped from their tents capless and coatless. Those who had caps swung them, and all shouted, 'Hurrah for General Wadsworth!' As he came galloping into camp accompanied by his staff, the brigade instantly surrounded him in so dense a mass as to hem him in entirely. He shook hands with all whom he could reach, asking after the health and fare of the men, then forced his way out of this press. . . . He did not expect such a greeting, and indeed such a greeting is vouchsafed to but few men in the army."—(Camp Fires of the 23rd Reg., N. Y. V., by Pound Sterling, p. 45.)

## CHAPTER V

### MILITARY GOVERNOR OF WASHINGTON: NEW YORK GUBERNATORIAL CAMPAIGN

THE culminating event of this March week of wonders was the return of McClellan and his army from Manassas to Alexandria. Instead of pressing after the retreating enemy he purposed, it seemed, to embark his vast force on transports and to make the first stage of his movement upon Richmond by water. The astonishment of the North at these developments, as well as the disgust of those who from first-hand knowledge saw in them the climax of the controversies of the past two months, finds vent in a letter written at the end of the week by Wadsworth's oldest daughter to her aunt in Europe.

NEW YORK, *March 15, 1862.*

. . . We have just returned from a short visit to Philadelphia and Washington. Mother, Lizzie, and myself arrived one fine evening in Washington where we met Father, whom I had not seen for eight months. The next morning he took us off to his headquarters at Upton's Hill, seven miles over the most atrocious roads that you ever imagined. We stayed there for three or four days, living in a very primitive manner. Lizzie and I had a room together, a desolate-looking attic room, . . . two camp cots and a tin basin were the sole pieces of furniture. One of the aides tacked up a couple of old blankets over the windows, and stuffed a big hole in the ceiling supposed to have been made by a Secessionist cannon-ball. On Saturday we returned to Washington, and on Sunday came the news that the rebels were evacuating Manassas. An immediate advance was ordered, and although Father had already—on Saturday—been offered the position I have



CORNELIA WADSWORTH RITCHIE.



NANCY WHARTON WADSWORTH.



ELIZABETH WADSWORTH.

DAUGHTERS OF JAMES S. WADSWORTH.

From photographs taken during the Civil War.



spoken of [that of military governor of Washington], he would not be left behind, and started on Monday morning for Centreville and Manassas. Monday was a most exciting day in Washington. Troops were moving in every direction, followed by long trains of army wagons. From Willard's hotel I saw pass forty-eight batteries of artillery, and McClellan and his staff—a brigade of itself. All were in the greatest spirits, with colors flying and bands playing; the streets were thronged with people cheering them as they passed. A great battle, a great victory, we all surely expected, and how did it all end? These magnificent columns, which have been waiting so impatiently all winter, this splendid corps d'armée marched to Manassas to find the enemy had quietly given them the slip, to find only empty fortifications with stove-pipes representing cannon, and so they were ordered back to Washington. This is probably what McClellan has been thinking about the last eight months. You probably see nothing but praise of McClellan in the newspapers you get abroad. He is extremely unpopular here for his arrogance to his divisional generals—many of them older than himself—his partiality for slavery. . . . The President and Cabinet all dislike him. For one thing we certainly have to thank him—by his inactivity he has gained for us the contempt of Europe. Do you wonder that we are ridiculed and laughed at when an army of forty or fifty thousand poorly equipped men have kept in check all winter our two hundred thousand on the banks of the Potomac?

Never, indeed, did commander set forth for the field under unhappier auspices than McClellan, when, on Monday, March 17, he began to embark his army at Alexandria. The state of mind of Stanton on that day, as reported by General Hitchcock in his diary, shows how the "lockjaw expedition" and the march to Manassas and back again had driven the Secretary of War to his wits' ends.

First of all, this morning, in an interview with the secretary of war, I declined his offers of a high station (two or three of them), and finally asked him if he would

allow me to be placed under his own orders as a staff officer, to render such service as I might be capable of. . . .

He then asked me to take a seat in his private council-room, where I remained most of the day. Towards evening he came in, and, shutting the door behind him, stated to me the most astounding facts, all going to show the astonishing incompetency of General McClellan. I cannot recite them; but the secretary stated fact after fact, until I felt positively *sick*—that falling of the heart which excludes hope.

I do not wonder, now, that the secretary offered even me the command of this Army of the Potomac. . . .

The secretary is immensely distressed, and with reason: he is dreadfully apprehensive of a great disaster, which, also, is not improbable.<sup>1</sup>

This atmosphere of jealous suspicion of McClellan, nowhere more tainted than in Washington, Wadsworth was to breathe during the months of the coming spring and summer. On his own part he had good reason for distrust, as he soon found out when he endeavored to ascertain precisely what troops were to be left behind to constitute his command.

McClellan's first thought at this time was naturally for the perfecting of the army with which he was to take the field. This care led him to make one deduction after another from the force originally designated for the defence of the capital. For expected siege operations he withdrew from the forts the regiments trained as heavy artillery; he organized additional divisions for one of his corps; for the artillery thus required he took horses from the batteries that were to be left behind.<sup>2</sup> To make up for this reduction he relied upon regiments that for one cause or another were not in condition to accompany the Army of the Potomac and upon raw

<sup>1</sup> Fifty Years in Camp and Field, p. 440.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. Barry's testimony at the McDowell court of inquiry.—(W. R., XII, pt. 1, p. 240.)

troops that had just reached the capital or were about to arrive there.

McClellan's justification of this course lay in his conviction that the vigorous movement of his own army against Richmond was the best way of occupying the forces of the enemy and so protecting Washington. Whatever the merit of this view, its weakness was that it treated too lightly the stipulation laid down by Lincoln, on recommendation of the four corps commanders, that the safety of Washington should be assured by the presence of a sufficient body of troops.<sup>1</sup> This fault McClellan, in view of the strained relations existing between him and the President and the Secretary of War, should have been sedulous to avoid. Still another error in the hasty arrangements which he made in these crowded days of work at Alexandria was that they did not take into account the peculiar opportunity which the Shenandoah Valley offered to a body of troops desiring thence to threaten Washington. Even less did they take into account the presence there of Stonewall Jackson, though, as Henderson remarks of McClellan's lack of precautions in this respect, "It would have been nothing short of miraculous had he even suspected that 4,500 men, under a professor of the higher mathematics, might bring to naught the operations of his gigantic host."<sup>2</sup> The battle of Kernstown, however, on March 23, when Jackson, though defeated, made himself felt, resulted in McClellan's remedying this neglect by sending back to the Shenandoah a considerable portion of Banks's command; but in so doing he deprived Washington of the force designed to protect it at Manassas and Warrenton and did nothing adequate to make good the deficiency. The final indication

<sup>1</sup> At a council of war held on March 13 these generals, while approving McClellan's plan for an advance on Richmond from Fortress Monroe, had recommended that, in addition to the garrison for the forts, at least twenty-five thousand troops should be left for the defence of Washington.—(5 W. R., p. 56.)

<sup>2</sup> Stonewall Jackson, I, 235.

of his failure, from whatever motive, to discharge his full responsibility in this matter upon which Lincoln and Stanton properly laid such stress is the fact that in his schedule of the forces left to defend Washington he not only included 3,500 men said to be "now ready in Pennsylvania," but also did not perceive that the body of 7,780 men which was to form part of this covering army was also included in his estimate of 23,000 men for Banks's army.<sup>1</sup> "It is too plain for argument," says Ropes, summing up his careful discussion of the matter, "that General McClellan did not give to the subject of the defence of Washington that strict and conscientious attention which its importance demanded, and which a man of the highest character would have given to it,—all the more because the matter was one which did not directly affect his own contemplated operations in the field. Moreover, the whole story shows how short-sighted was McClellan's course." <sup>2</sup>

McClellan was not a man with the gift of concealing his feelings, and when on April 1 Lincoln went down to Alexandria to bid him farewell his indifference to the safety of Washington was so apparent as to cause the President considerable uneasiness. He was in no position, however, to extract from McClellan a definite statement on this head, for one of the objects of his visit was to make clear to the commander the necessity of taking from the Army of the Potomac Blenker's division, in order that Frémont in the Mountain Department might have a force of sufficient importance. Politics and "pressure," as Lincoln himself regretfully admitted, were responsible for his proposal—though the anxiety aroused by Jackson's giving battle at Kernstown was also a consideration of weight—and must be paramount, in spite of the opposition of McClellan and Hitchcock.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ropes's Story of the Civil War, I, 262-264.

<sup>2</sup> Ropes, I, 265.

<sup>3</sup> As to Stanton's position, compare the following: "When I heard of the design to remove that division from the front of Washington I expressed



Instead, therefore, of being able to ask with authority for sufficient troops to make the city safe, Lincoln was obliged to give McClellan "positive and emphatic assurance" that after Blenker's division no more men should be withdrawn from him.<sup>1</sup> The mood in which the two men parted was not a happy augury for the future. McClellan turned to write the final letters of instruction to Banks and Wadsworth as to the size and disposal of their commands, requiring of the latter at this last moment some regiments for the Army of the Potomac which would in part make up for the loss of Blenker. He also prepared for the War Department a statement, impressive but misleading, showing that in Virginia, the Shenandoah Valley, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New York there was a force of seventy-three thousand available for the defence of the capital. Lincoln on his part took back to Washington a troubled mind which McDowell, who happened to be on the boat with him, could do little to relieve.<sup>2</sup>

During all this time, that is, for the first fortnight of his service in his new position, Wadsworth had found it impossible to ascertain what troops were then and what troops were ultimately to be under his authority. For lack of a better means of obtaining the necessary information, he inserted a notice in the Washington newspapers requiring officers whose commands constituted a part of the defending force to report to him; but the results were by no means satisfactory. Part of the evi-

my opinion to the secretary of war that it ought not to be done. He acquiesced at once in that view, and desired me to go with him to the President and explain it to the President, which I did, but without success."—(General Hitchcock's testimony before the McDowell court of inquiry, W. R., XII, pt. 1, p. 220.)

"I am vigorously urging the President to send you seventeen thousand troops, infantry, cavalry, artillery, and pontoon train. He will decide to-day."—(Stanton to Frémont, March 31, W. R., XII, pt. 3, p. 34.) Truly an extraordinary man, as baffling to the historian and the biographer as he was to his contemporaries!

<sup>1</sup> McClellan's report, 5 W. R., p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> McDowell's testimony, C. W., pt. 1, p. 261.

dence that came to him from day to day seemed to show that his command was to be made up exclusively of troops that were raw, disorganized, or imperfectly equipped.

In this state of affairs, with Lincoln, Stanton, and Wadsworth jealously watchful of the departing commander, it was the final letter of McClellan's, already referred to, that confirmed their suspicions, and it was Wadsworth's action thereupon that set in operation the train of events which McClellan's partisans later affirmed prevented him from capturing Richmond. On the morning of April 2, the day after McClellan's departure, General Wadsworth appeared at the War Department with McClellan's letter of the day before ordering him to detach four good regiments to the Army of the Potomac and to send four thousand men to Manassas. In his whole command, Wadsworth said, he had not that number of men in fit condition to take the field, and to that effect he had telegraphed the general commanding at Manassas.<sup>1</sup> From Wadsworth's indignant narrative Stanton received the full revelation of McClellan's contemptuous ignorance and indifference in regard to provision for the safety of Washington. The facts as Wadsworth wrote them down for Stanton are here given:

HEADQUARTERS MILITARY DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON,  
WASHINGTON, D. C., *April 2, 1862.*

SIR:—I have the honor to submit the following condensed statement of the forces left under my command for the defences of Washington:

Infantry . . . . .	15,335
Artillery . . . . .	4,294
Cavalry (six companies only mounted) . . . . .	848
	<hr/> 20,477
Deduct sick, and in arrest and confinement . . . . .	1,455
Total present for duty . . . . .	<hr/> 19,022 <hr/>

<sup>1</sup> W. R., XI, pt. 3, p. 57.

I have no mounted light artillery under my command.

Several companies of the reserve artillery of the army of the Potomac are still here, but not under my command or fit for service.

Of this force I am ordered by General McClellan to detail two regiments (good ones) to join Richardson's division (Sumner's corps) as it passes through Alexandria; one regiment to replace the 37th New York volunteers in Heintzelman's old division, and one regiment to relieve a regiment of Hooker's division at Budd's Ferry. Total, four regiments.

I am further ordered this morning by telegraph to send 4,000 men to relieve General Sumner at Manassas and Warrenton, that he may embark forthwith.

In regard to the character and efficiency of the troops under my command, I have to state that nearly all the force is new and imperfectly disciplined; that several of the regiments are in a very disorganized condition from various causes, which it is not necessary to state here. Several regiments having been relieved from brigades which have gone into the field, in consequence of their unfitness for service, the best regiments remaining have been selected to take their place.

Two heavy artillery regiments and one infantry regiment, which had been drilled for some months in artillery service, have been withdrawn from the forts on the south side of the Potomac, and I have only been able to fill their place with very new infantry regiments, entirely unacquainted with the duties of that arm, and of little or no value in their present position.

I am not informed as to the position which Major-General Banks is directed to take; but at this time he is, as I understand, on the other side of the Bull Run mountains, leaving my command to cover the front from Manassas Gap (about twenty miles beyond Manassas) to Aquia creek.

I deem it my duty to state that, looking at the numerical strength and character of the force under my command, it is, in my judgment, entirely inadequate to, and unfit for, the important duty to which it is assigned. I regard it very improbable that the enemy will assail us at this point; but this belief is based upon the hope

that they may be promptly engaged elsewhere, and may not learn the number and character of the force left here.

I have the honor to be your obedient servant,

JAMES S. WADSWORTH,

Brigadier General and Military Governor.

THE HON. SECRETARY OF WAR.<sup>1</sup>

No man was less fitted than Stanton to bear calmly the shock of such a piece of news. To his natural apprehensions for the safety of the capital and his distrust of McClellan was now added a sense of outrage at an act of high-handed carelessness which had all the aspect of a personal affront. Sending for Lorenzo Thomas, the adjutant-general of the army, and for General Hitchcock, he turned over to them the President's instructions as given in his War Orders, the recommendations of the corps commanders, and the statements of McClellan and Wadsworth, and bade them report whether or not the commander of the Army of the Potomac had done what was required for the defence of the capital. In the course of a few hours the two officers made answer that Lincoln's conditions had not been complied with.<sup>2</sup>

The scandal of this situation was not long in spreading from the War Department to the Capitol, where, at the slightest rumor of mismanagement in the Army of the Potomac, the Committee on the Conduct of the War always promptly met and began summoning witnesses to its sessions. Since its inquiries as to the "Quaker guns" at Centreville it had had little to feed upon; now, on April 3, it assembled to take its fill of sensation from Wadsworth's letter and the comments with which he elucidated it. As to the number of troops which would in his opinion render Washington safe, his

<sup>1</sup> W. R., XI, pt. 3, p. 60. A year later the *New York World* attacked Wadsworth for the statements made in this letter. For his reply and further discussion of the subject, see Appendix E.

<sup>2</sup> All the documents are printed in W. R., XI, pt. 3, pp. 57-62. Generals Totten, Taylor, Meigs, and Ripley, all of them being familiar with the situation at Washington, took the same view.—(W. R., XIX, pt. 2, p. 726.)

estimate is of interest, because, being considerably lower than the lowest estimate of McClellan's corps commanders, it shows how little his judgment was moved in these hours of alarm.

I should say that while the army of the rebels occupies its present position at Culpeper and Gordonsville, with none of our troops between this city and them, not less than twenty-five thousand first-class troops should occupy the city of Washington and its defences. With that number this place can be held against any number the rebels can bring against it. When that rebel army disperses, which must be soon, of course a less number would be required here. If this were any other place than the capital of the nation, even a less number might be deemed sufficient now; but being the capital, while the rebel army remains at Culpeper and Gordonsville, only some forty miles from here, with no army of ours in front of them, I think there should be troops enough here to render this capital safe beyond any contingency.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile Lincoln, after a long conference at the War Department with the various chiefs, directed Stanton to detain at Alexandria one of the corps of the Army of the Potomac which had not yet embarked for the Peninsula. Stanton, who had a constitutional tendency to panic, chose that of McDowell, the largest in the army, having at this time thirty-three thousand men present for duty. On April 4 the Department of the Rappahannock, with McDowell in command, was created, and as the District of Columbia was included in it Wadsworth henceforth reported to his old commander.<sup>2</sup> The President also cancelled McClellan's order to Wadsworth to send regiments to Manassas and to the Army of the

<sup>1</sup> C. W., pt. 1, p. 253.

<sup>2</sup> On the same day the Department of the Shenandoah was created, with Banks in command. There were then in the East, as commanders of distinct departments, McClellan, McDowell, Banks, Frémont, Wool at Fortress Monroe, Dix at Baltimore, Burnside in North Carolina, and Hunter in South Carolina.

Potomac. Finally, to man the forts on the south side of the Potomac, two<sup>1</sup> of the three regiments which McClellan had proposed to take to constitute his siege train were retained. The withholding of McDowell's corps at this juncture, after Lincoln's "positive and emphatic assurance" to McClellan that his army should suffer no further depletion, was an act against which McClellan protested at the time and on the unfortunate consequences of which he and his friends never ceased to harp. Yet it is hard to see how, given the men and the situation, Lincoln could have done otherwise. As the last word on the subject, let him speak in his own defence:

My explicit order that Washington should, by the judgment of all the commanders of army corps, be left entirely secure, had been neglected. It was precisely this that drove me to detain McDowell.

I do not forget that I was satisfied with your [McClellan's] arrangement to leave Banks at Manassas Junction; but when that arrangement was broken up and nothing was substituted for it, of course I was constrained to substitute something for it myself. And allow me to ask, do you really think I should permit the line from Richmond via Manassas Junction to this city to be entirely open except what resistance could be presented by less than twenty thousand unorganized troops? This is a question which the country will not allow me to evade.<sup>2</sup>

The two days of stress over, there was before Wadsworth the duty of transferring to the Virginia side of the Potomac men to fill the forts which had been stripped by McClellan and of sending the raw regiments to a camp of instruction near Alexandria. The infantry made good progress in proficiency, but the cavalry were for the most part unmounted and without arms, save sabres,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The 26th New York and the 3d New York Heavy.

<sup>2</sup> W. R., XII, pt. 1, p. 230.

<sup>3</sup> Wadsworth's testimony before the McDowell court of inquiry.—(W. R., XII, pt. 1, p. 114.)



and the light artillery had difficulty in obtaining a supply of horses. The deficiencies of Wadsworth's command were glaringly revealed on April 19, when, in spite of his protest, Stanton insisted that he should suppose the city to be attacked, and should order all the troops within the city limits to hurry to the long bridge and the aqueduct communicating with the Virginia shore. There, three hours after the alarm was given, an inspection was to be held of the number and condition of the troops thus reporting; four thousand one hundred men appeared, some with little ammunition, some with none. The only regiment that the inspector-general could characterize as "efficient" was one of cavalry recently returned from several weeks' hard campaigning in the Shenandoah.<sup>1</sup> In the forts on the south side of the river, too, ammunition was scarce, and it was only after long delays and repeated requisitions that a supply could be procured for them.<sup>2</sup> Wadsworth himself has told the story of his efforts to put his nondescript army into condition.<sup>3</sup>

I had some fragments of light artillery companies, which I filled up by detailing men from infantry regiments and unmounted cavalry. The great difficulty was as to horses, owing to the numerous requisitions for General McClellan's expedition. I procured an order from the secretary of war to impress horses in Virginia from disloyal citizens<sup>4</sup> and to break up a wagon train in the quartermaster's department. In this way I mounted two batteries, and subsequently twelve others, seven of which were sent into the field, and seven turned over to my successor in the command of the defences.

The impulse that caused Stanton to order Wadsworth to assemble his forces to resist an imaginary at-

<sup>1</sup> W. R., XII, pt. 1, pp. 225, 226.

<sup>2</sup> W. R., XII, pt. 1, p. 219.

<sup>3</sup> In a letter in the *New York Times*, May 15, 1863, written in reply to attacks made by partisans of McClellan. See Appendix E.

<sup>4</sup> Wadsworth's order to the commander of the expedition contains a characteristic phrase: "But do not oppress the poor families."—(117 W. R., p. 50.)

tack at the very gates of the city is one of not a few instances that show how during the spring of 1862 the secretary's satisfaction in his strategy was from time to time darkened by the shadow cast by Stonewall Jackson. In the latter days of April the Confederate commander's inactivity in the upper part of the valley, where Banks was supposed to be watching him strictly, was regarded in Washington now as a favorable now as an unfavorable omen. Early in May it became known that Jackson had been reinforced, and straightway both McDowell at Fredericksburg and Frémont in the mountain region west of the Shenandoah conceived themselves in danger of attack. As for Stanton, on May 9 he expressed his belief that "The probabilities at present point to a possible attack upon Washington while the Shenandoah army is amused with demonstrations. Washington is the only object now worth a desperate throw."<sup>1</sup> The news of Jackson's sudden descent, the day before, on a portion of Frémont's command at the village of McDowell, at the same time that it showed the Secretary of War how wide of the mark his guess had been, did little to allay his apprehensions of this man who moved in mystery. Nevertheless, when Jackson after his victory again relapsed into quiet, Lincoln and Stanton felt safe in pushing their preparations for strengthening McDowell's force by the addition of Shields's division from Banks's command, and for then sending McDowell overland from Fredericksburg to McClellan's aid.

One or two signs there were, however, which, if properly followed up, would have given the Union authorities the clue to their danger. The railroad from Alexandria to Strasburg in the Shenandoah Valley, which had been put in running order as far as Front Royal, where it entered the valley through a gap in the Blue Ridge, was protected by Colonel Geary with a small force. On May 15 a considerable body of Confederate

<sup>1</sup> W. R., VII, pt. 3, p. 151.



cavalry dashed down upon one of his outposts, capturing prisoners and also despatches which Banks was sending to him.<sup>1</sup> Wadsworth, on receiving Geary's report, notified McDowell, who gave orders that log-houses be built in which the detachments of Geary's command might defend themselves against these roving bodies; he also ordered Wadsworth if possible to strengthen Geary's force from Washington, but this Wadsworth, having stripped the city of troops to go with McDowell, did not feel justified in doing. Nevertheless, in spite of McDowell's belief that all was well, Geary was by no means satisfied that trouble was not brewing. On the night of May 20 he sent a small force from Front Royal to make a reconnoissance ten miles up the Luray Valley, and the report that was brought back of Confederates approaching from that direction was so disquieting that it shook even the serenity of Banks at Strasburg.<sup>2</sup> In Washington, however, all was calm. The President and the Secretary of War had left for Fredericksburg to witness a grand review of McDowell's army before it marched to join McClellan, and the capture of Richmond seemed assured within a few weeks.

In point of fact, the attack on Geary on May 15, which had so disturbed him and which McDowell had regarded so philosophically, had been made by a Confederate scouting party sent out for the express purpose of tracing the departure of Shields to McDowell's assistance. The authorities at Richmond had been at once notified of this weakening of the Union force in the valley; the critical moment had come, the trained eye of Lee perceived, for Jackson to make his long-desired attempt to threaten Washington by moving against Banks, and in this way to check McClellan's advance upon Richmond. On May 18, accordingly, the commander of the Army of the Valley began his famous

<sup>1</sup> W. R., XII, pt. 1, p. 501.

<sup>2</sup> See his letter to Stanton of May 22.—(W. R., XII, pt. 1, p. 524.)

“raid.” He chose to steal upon his adversary by way of the Luray Valley, which is separated by the Massanutten range from the main valley, and on May 21, when the Federal scouting party got wind of his advance, he was well on his way toward Front Royal. On May 23 he suddenly fell upon the small force there, crushed it speedily, and set out at once to cut off Banks at Strasburg.

The astounding events of the succeeding week, when Banks, retreating rapidly down the valley, barely got his army across the Potomac in safety, and when Jackson, hot in pursuit, threatened Harper’s Ferry, produced at the War Department a state of mind that for the remainder of the war was grimly referred to in the North as the “great scare.” It was in effect the visiting upon Lincoln and Stanton of the full consequences of the arrangement by which McClellan, McDowell, Banks, and Frémont commanded armies working independently of each other except for such control as the civilian authorities at Washington were inspired to give. In a sudden crisis requiring the highest degree of military sagacity and firmness, these authorities were utterly destitute of the experience that breaks the force of instinctive alarm, discriminates between possible and probable danger, and discerns unerringly between what can and what cannot be accomplished. The President and the Secretary of War, acting on untrained impulse, ordered McDowell to abandon his march toward Richmond and to make all haste to the Shenandoah, closing in on Jackson from one side while Frémont did the same from the other. Meanwhile, Northern governors were exhorted in frantic telegrams from Stanton to hurry militia to the defence of the capital, upon which, as it seemed to his excited imagination, the troops of the enemy were about to descend overwhelmingly.

From this frenzy of apprehension Wadsworth seems to have been altogether free. Against the plans formed

by Lincoln and Stanton, which he felt must prove ineffective and which he was sure were injudicious, he protested vigorously, even to the point of overstepping the bounds of military etiquette. He did his best to dissuade the President from despatching McDowell on a chase after Jackson;<sup>1</sup> he urged that the country be not needlessly alarmed by a call for fresh troops.<sup>2</sup> Both efforts proving vain, however, he turned with a will to do his part in the things needful to be done to carry into effect the elaborate piece of strategy which Lincoln and Stanton had devised to trap Jackson. At one time he was sending reinforcements to Geary; at another time he was at Alexandria, giving help in the forwarding of McDowell's corps to the Shenandoah. He had to quiet Stanton, who suddenly discovered that only three hundred cavalry had been left in Washington; he despatched telegrams to McDowell informing him of the state of things in the valley; he sent a force up the Potomac to sink the boats at the ferries and to guard the fords. It was, in fact, one of those times of impromptu co-operation when some pieces of work are done twice and others not at all. But this medley of effort could have little chance of success against the genius of Jackson. On the night of May 31 the Confederate general and his "foot cavalry" slipped between the Union forces about to close in upon them from east and west and made good their escape up the Shenandoah.

The activities brought on by Jackson's raid constituted the last of Wadsworth's duties as a commander intrusted with the defence of Washington. During the eight weeks in which he carried this responsibility he had found his time also heavily taxed by his work as military governor, particularly, as is about to be narrated, by reason of a crisis arising from the emancipation of the slaves in the District of Columbia. This double

<sup>1</sup> Wadsworth's letter in the *New York Times*, May 15, 1863.

<sup>2</sup> Gurowski's *Diary*, 1861-1862, p. 213.

set of duties and the exacting demands of each Stanton recognized on June 18 by organizing into an army corps the forces in and about Washington, except such as were needed for provost guard duty, and by placing them under the command of Brigadier-General S. D. Sturgis.<sup>1</sup> This was only one step in the general reorganization which resulted on June 26 in Lincoln's order creating the Army of Virginia, to be composed of the troops in the Mountain Department, of those in the Departments of the Shenandoah and the Rappahannock, and of General Sturgis's corps, and to be commanded by Major-General John Pope.<sup>2</sup> Henceforth Wadsworth's duties were to be exclusively those of an officer exercising military command in a place where the civil law held sway.

It is no easy thing to shut one's eyes to the Washington of the present day and to construct a picture of the "overgrown watering-place" of sixty-one thousand inhabitants which Wadsworth had been called upon to govern. The effect produced upon the visitor by its temporary and shifting population was intensified by the appearance of its unfinished public buildings. The dome of the Capitol was a "bare framework of beams and girders, surmounted by a crane"; in many places "its staring red-brick walls" were "still without their marble facings." Work on the Washington Monument had been stopped. The Treasury Building, as an observer suggested, "would make a good Palmyra." "The roads," wrote Edward Dicey, the English publicist who visited the city in March, 1862, "appear to have been marked out and then left uncompleted, and the pigs you see grubbing in the main thoroughfares seem in keeping with the place. The broken-down ramshackle hackney-coaches (or hacks, as they are called), with their shabby negro drivers, are obviously brought out for the day, to last for the day only; the shops are of the stock Margate

<sup>1</sup> W. R., XII, pt. 3, p. 408.

<sup>2</sup> W. R., XII, pt. 3, p. 435.

watering-place stamp, where nothing is kept in stock, and where what little there is is all displayed in the shop-windows. The private houses, handsome enough in themselves, are apparently stuck up anywhere the owner liked to build them, just as a travelling-van is perched on the first convenient spot that can be found for a night's lodging."<sup>1</sup> "The whole place looks run up in a night, like the cardboard cities which Potemkin erected to gratify the eyes of his imperial mistress on her tour through Russia; and it is impossible to remove the impression that, when Congress is over, the whole place is taken down, and packed up again till wanted."<sup>2</sup>

The population of the city at this time was inevitably nondescript and far from homogeneous. The permanent residents, "a few land-owners who have estates in the neighborhood, a few lawyers connected with the Supreme Court, and a host of petty tradesmen and lodging-house keepers,"<sup>3</sup> were naturally Southern in tone and sympathy; the temper of the floating population, which for long years had been that of the Democratic majority, still persisted in these first months of the Republican administration. The military, transient from the nature of the case, consisted of new bodies arriving and going into camp, other troops returning from the front for various reasons, and individuals, privates, and officers, separated from their organizations from one cause or another and therefore especially difficult of control. Last of all, there were the negroes, enslaved and free, to the number of nearly thirteen thousand.<sup>4</sup>

For a city so many of whose inhabitants were under suspicion as disloyal and which harbored such large numbers of soldiery, the civil authority required supplementing by some power that at need could be vigorous and

<sup>1</sup> Edward Dickey, *Six Months in the Federal States*, I, 95.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 93.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 94.

<sup>4</sup> According to the Census Report of 1860, the number of free blacks in Washington and Georgetown was 10,567 and of slaves 2,351.

arbitrary. To this end, during the fall and winter of 1861-1862, the provost-marshal general of the Army of the Potomac, Colonel A. Porter, had exercised various functions in addition to those proper to his office. With a force of three thousand men he had maintained a military police and guarded the bridges and ferries. He also had charge of the state prisoners, confined in what was known as the Old Capitol Prison, and controlled a detective force which kept under surveillance persons suspected of treasonable conduct. Furthermore, it was his duty to provide for the negroes, forlorn and half-famished, who, as has already been seen, were flocking in from Virginia. It was to have charge of all these matters and any similar ones arising that, when the Army of the Potomac was about to take the field, the office of military governor of Washington was created.

The commander filling this post, however, could hardly hope to discharge his duties without sooner or later incurring the antagonism of the civil authorities. In particular, the composition of the circuit court of the District of Columbia was such that trouble of this sort could easily be fomented. One judge, it is true, was efficient and loyal; but the second was over eighty years old, while the third was of decided pro-slavery sympathies; indeed, Henry Wilson, of Massachusetts, declared of him in the Senate that "his heart is sweltering with treason."<sup>1</sup> This last judge, far from applying to himself the maxim *Inter arma silent leges*, had chosen this as a fitting time to assert the majesty of the law. In October, 1861, he had allowed a writ of habeas corpus to issue against Colonel Porter, in order that a father might get back his seventeen-year-old son who had enlisted without his consent. This act of judicial pedantry—not to call it by a worse name—did not, it is hardly necessary to say, meet with the approval of the Federal government; Lincoln promptly suspended the privilege

<sup>1</sup> Globe, 37 Cong., 3 Sess., 1139.



of the writ in the case of soldiers in the District of Columbia, and the judge found himself shut up in his house under guard.<sup>1</sup>

The ministerial officer of the court, moreover, Marshal Ward H. Lamon, who had recently acquired much notoriety by his pretentious behavior as Lincoln's confidential agent and friend and by his claim to be a brigadier-general, had adopted a policy in dealing with fugitive slaves which, being shaped to please the Southern sympathizers in Washington, would almost certainly bring him into collision with any military person in authority who chanced to be on the side of the negro. According to the black code of Maryland and Virginia, which prevailed in the District, a slave found abroad beyond a certain distance from his master's house and unprovided with written authorization from his master or overseer was liable to arrest. No free negro was safe who had not with him his "certificate of freedom."<sup>2</sup> The "apprehension fee" paid by the owner for the recovery of a slave was a constant inducement to the rowdies in town to become self-constituted kidnappers, and the advent of the unvouched-for contrabands from Virginia had been an opportunity of which they were not slow to take advantage. Under such conditions the city jail was soon filled to overflowing with fugitives brought there in the hope that their owners would appear to recover their property and to distribute fees generously. To his colleagues in the Senate Wilson, denouncing the frightful state of things existing in the jail, in which were confined nearly four times as many persons as it was designed to accommodate, asserted that he had even found in it slaves of disloyal masters placed there for safe-keeping till the war should be ended!<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Hayward and Hazletine's Reports of the Circuit Court of the District of Columbia, II, 394-401.

<sup>2</sup> Tremain, Slavery in the District of Columbia, p. 39.

<sup>3</sup> Speech of December 4, 1861.—(Globe, 37 Cong., 2 Sess., 10.)

In retaliation for the remarks of Wilson and other anti-slavery senators, Lamon issued an order to the effect that no senator unprovided with a permit from him should be allowed to visit the jail.<sup>1</sup> The President finally intervened in the squabble and forestalled action on the part of Congress by ordering Lamon to clear the jail within ten days of all cases held on suspicion; to receive into custody no fugitives unless upon arrest or commitment pursuant to law; and to retain these not beyond thirty days.<sup>2</sup> As a result thirty negroes were set free.<sup>3</sup>

With these circumstances of antecedent irritation, it is not surprising that when a military governor of Washington appeared in the person of Wadsworth, having anti-slavery sympathies irrepressibly militant, the protection that he gave to the negro, whether fugitive or free, afforded to one judge at least of the circuit court and to its marshal occasion for a conflict to which they were by no means averse.

All slaves who had been employed by their disloyal masters in some form of work against the United States had been by the terms of the Confiscation Act of August, 1861, set free. According to the interpretation of this act permitted by the War Department, the fact of disloyalty on the part of the master was presumption that the slave had been so employed. Such slaves when fugitives were considered "contraband of war" in the apt phrase of General Butler, and were specifically under the protection of the military authorities.<sup>4</sup> One of Wadsworth's plain first duties as military governor, therefore, was to provide adequately for the contrabands in Wash-

<sup>1</sup> The report of the congressional committee appointed to investigate the jail showed that Lamon, receiving twenty-one cents a day for the keep of each prisoner, was making on that allowance a profit of nearly one hundred per cent.—(*New York Tribune*, July 2, 1862.)

<sup>2</sup> Seward to Lamon, January 25, 1862, printed in the *National Republican*, February 1.

<sup>3</sup> *National Republican*, February 28.

<sup>4</sup> See Seward's letter to McClellan of December 4, 1861.—(*Greeley's American Conflict*, II, 244.)



ington from Virginia, the number of whom had been increasing rapidly since the withdrawal of the Confederates toward Richmond.<sup>1</sup> He accordingly gave them quarters in what was known as Duff Green's Row, east of the Capitol, and he assigned them a superintendent charged with the duties of attending to their necessities, providing them with work, and teaching them the difficult task of learning to work for themselves. Food for all was supplied by the government, which also employed many of the men as laborers at forty cents a day. Through Wadsworth's efforts some of their wants were supplied from the goods confiscated from blockade-runners; others were ministered to by the National Freedmen's Association, recently formed for this purpose. Representatives of other like philanthropic bodies came to labor among them, schools were established, and in the course of a few months these fugitives were learning the first lessons of freedom under auspices that were both kindly and firm. In June 200 women and children and 100 men

<sup>1</sup> The condition of these unfortunates was vividly described by Edward Dicey, who went to Manassas on the first train to run after the road had been rebuilt from Alexandria:

"On our return to the cars [at Manassas] we came upon a strange living evidence of the results of this strange war. Huddled together upon a truck were a group of some dozen runaway slaves. There were three men, four women, and half a dozen children. Anything more helpless or wretched than their aspect I never saw. Miserably clothed, footsore, and weary, they crouched in the hot sunlight more like animals than men. They seemed to have no idea, no plan, and no distinct purpose. They were field-hands on a farm some score of miles off, and had walked all night; so at least they told us. Now they were going North as far as Washington, which appeared to them the end of the world. They had no fear of being recaptured, partly I think, because they had reached Northern troops, still more because their home seemed to them so far away. With the exception of one woman, who was going to look for her husband, who was hired out somewhere in the District of Columbia, they talked as if they had no friends or acquaintances in the new land they were travelling to. For the present they were content that they could sit in the sun without being forced to work. Some of our party gave them money, and broken victuals which they valued more. I overheard one of the men saying to a woman, as he munched some white bread he had picked up, 'Massa never gave us food like that.' Poor things, if their idea of freedom was white bread and rest, they must have been disappointed bitterly!"—(Federal States, II, 29, 30.)

were thus taken care of;<sup>1</sup> during one week in July there were 376 arrivals, 156 of whom found employment at once.<sup>2</sup>

The treatment of fugitives from Maryland could not be so simple. They had escaped from masters who were still residing on their plantations and who either were loyal or, if disloyal, made a pretence of allegiance to the Union. Loyal masters were, of course, entitled to the assistance of the law in getting back such of their slaves as ran away; by the same token it was absurd and, from Wadsworth's point of view, unendurable that men who were working to overthrow the Federal government should be able to invoke its laws to recover their human property. He therefore adopted the policy of taking measures to inform himself as to the loyalty of the master of a fugitive brought before him, and, when he had become satisfied that the master was of secession sympathies, of issuing to the negro a paper stating that "the bearer, A—— B——, colored, is under the protection of the military authorities of the District."<sup>3</sup> When Wadsworth put his signature to one of these "military protections," as they were called, he intended it to guarantee to the fugitive the full strength of his authority as a bulwark against both the violence of the hoodlum kidnappers and the activity of the civil power.

Meanwhile, at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue there were signs that told of the progress of events toward Emancipation. On March 6 Lincoln sent to Congress his message recommending that the United States co-operate with any State to secure gradual emancipation; on March 10 Congress passed an additional article of war prohibiting officers from employing the forces under their command to return fugitives; and on April 16 the act abolishing slavery within the District of Columbia received the President's signature. There were

<sup>1</sup> *National Republican*, June 11, 1862.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, July 21.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, July 21.

also under discussion in Congress various measures the purpose of which was to extend the scope of the Confiscation Act of August, 1861, along the line which Wadsworth was already following.

During the debates on the bill liberating slaves in the District of Columbia, the excitement in Washington and in the adjoining counties of Maryland became daily more and more intense. Within the District indignant slave-holders, none too loyal at best to the cause of the Union, perceiving that their protests against the measure were likely to be in vain, began to remove their slaves to Maryland;<sup>1</sup> but with the new haven of safety so near at hand they could hardly be surer of retaining their property there than if they had tried to keep it at home. The events of the next few weeks justified their apprehensions, for cases of escaping slaves became more and more frequent. Moreover, the activity of kidnappers and their use of fire-arms in running down their prey created a situation of disorder which was likely at any moment to require stringent measures from the military governor. The slave-holders of the region about Washington knew Wadsworth to be a man whose actions were likely to be even better than his words, and by way of heading him off they began to clamor for the machinery of the Fugitive Slave Law, in order to effect the recovery of their slaves under the protection of the courts. Of the willingness of the circuit court of the District of Columbia to appoint the necessary commissioners under the law they had no doubt, for they considered as of no weight the argument of anti-slavery men that neither the constitutional provision guaranteeing the right of an owner to a slave escaping from one State to another State, nor the fugitive slave laws of 1793 and 1850, covered the case of a slave escaping from a State to the District of

<sup>1</sup> It was estimated that about two thousand slaves were removed from the District before the Emancipation Act was passed.—(*National Republican*, June 19.)

Columbia.<sup>1</sup> To make assurance doubly sure, however, the Maryland slave-owners decided to lay their case before the President. On Monday, May 19, a delegation of them, led by some of their members of Congress, appeared before him to urge that they should not be deprived of the benefit of the law upon which they were relying. This being the period of Lincoln's "Border State policy," the time when he was bending every effort to induce the border States to initiate a course of compensated emancipation, he was inclined to give the Marylanders the benefit of the doubtful situation. Though he made no explicit reply to their representations, they went away in good spirits, having, so they declared, private intimations that their request would not be denied.<sup>2</sup> At any rate, some forty of them betook themselves to the court-house to procure warrants for the reclamation of their property, and on the same day the circuit court, promptly fulfilling their expectations, appointed three commissioners to hear any case arising under the Fugitive Slave Law.

The incompleteness of the measures of emancipation already passed by Congress became apparent the instant the omnipotence of this remarkable statute was invoked; the marshal and his deputies, impelled by the powerful *vis a tergo* of heavy fines, overran the town.<sup>3</sup> They could invade the contraband quarters with impunity; they could even make search through the regimental camps, for the article of war recently passed, though forbidding officers to return fugitives, made no provision for keeping out civil authorities bent on such an errand. Wadsworth's military protections counted for naught, and Lamon's promise that a fugitive thus provided should,

<sup>1</sup> See Sumner's speech of May 23, 1862 (Globe, 37 Cong., 2 Sess., 2306), and an editorial in the *New York Tribune*, May 30, 1863.

<sup>2</sup> *New York Evening Post*, May 19.

<sup>3</sup> The marshal was required to make unusual exertions to enforce the law under penalty of a fine of one thousand dollars. If the slave escaped the marshal was liable to a civil suit.

if apprehended, be turned back to him, in order that the loyalty of the master might again be investigated, was evaded. One negro, arrested in spite of a "protection," was tried and returned to his master with such speed that Wadsworth had no opportunity to make his investigation. In other cases Wadsworth was not notified at all.

In the course of their legalized prowlings, Lamon's officials came to the camp of the Seventy-sixth New York. Here the anti-slavery spirit of the plain soldiers, responsive to the dictates of the "higher law," brought the slave-hunters to a stand, and the camp, which contained a number of negroes acting as officers' servants and in other capacities, went unsearched. On the next day, however, May 22, as the regiment marched through the streets of the city, it was set upon by the same men. The fugitives were being protected by the menace of bayonets and by a few good knock-down blows from clubbed muskets, but on sight of the writs the officers of the regiments ordered their men to desist, and two captives were taken off for trial.<sup>1</sup>

At the court-house, whither the victims were brought to appear before the commissioners, further demonstration of the might of the Fugitive Slave Law within the District was now to be given. These gentlemen, who were of assured conservative, if not Southern, proclivities, had that morning announced a decision that the law (Section 6) required their proceedings to be *ex parte* and summary, and that they were not competent to inquire as to the loyalty of the claimant except when he resided in a State that had seceded.<sup>2</sup> By this decision,

<sup>1</sup> See the History of the 76th N. Y., p. 57, where it is noted with pride that the incident was reported in the London papers.

<sup>2</sup> *National Intelligencer* and *Maryland News Sheet* of May 24. The commissioners further decided that a slave could not participate by cross-examination or counter-proof, but that they might at their discretion cross-examine or allow counter-proof in his behalf. In a later case they announced their willingness to admit testimony to show that slaves had been employed against the United States Government.—(*National Republican*, June 13.)

the slave-holders of Maryland, a large number of whom, it is to be remembered, were disloyal, would be able to recover their fugitive slaves without the disagreeable necessity of taking the oath of allegiance to the United States Government. Veritably, on this day the slave power reached the *ne plus ultra* of its legal triumphs, and that, too, in the capital of the nation.

A decision much less extreme than this would have sufficed to stir up Wadsworth's fighting spirit; as it was, he was now ready to go to almost any length in upholding the dignity of the military arm in the city of Washington. The spark which touched off his quick temper was the news brought to him at the end of this same day that Althea Lynch, a mulatto having one of his protections, had been put in the city jail overnight pending further examination by the commissioners. "It stands upon something like record," to employ a serviceable phrase of the elder Trevelyan, that the said Althea Lynch was cook in the Wadsworth household and that the prospects were dark for breakfast the next morning; but perhaps it is safer to regard this assertion as an embellishment of the narrative. At any rate, having personal knowledge that her owner was disloyal, Wadsworth sent to the jail and demanded the release of the prisoner. The jailer refused. A second demand, threatening force, was also denied. Then Wadsworth, at about nine o'clock in the evening, sent thither his aide, Lieutenant John A. Kress, with a dozen soldiers, who, after considerable parleying, arrested the jailer and also the deputy-marshal, who had arrived upon the scene, took possession of the jail, and set free not only the mulatto in question but all the other contrabands there confined. Lamont, now aroused, dashed to the White House, only to discover that the President was out of town, and then, collecting a force of city police, proceeded to the jail at two o'clock in the morning. Finding there only two of Wadsworth's men, he was easily able to turn the tables



on the military. Later in the day there was a courteous release of the prisoners captured by both sides in this engagement, but the marshal did not regain possession of Althea Lynch.

Meanwhile the situation in its legal aspects was undergoing rapid developments. On the decision of the commissioners that one of the negroes snatched from the ranks, as it were, of the Seventy-sixth New York was to be returned to his master, the lawyer, John Dean of Brooklyn, who had been employed to defend the fugitive, applied for a writ of *habeas corpus* in order to test the applicability of the Fugitive Slave Law in the District of Columbia. Dean's argument had weight with anti-slavery lawyers at least; but the refusal of his application by the circuit court<sup>1</sup> made it plain that the only hope of remedy lay in Congress. As that body was not yet ready to repeal or to suspend the Fugitive Slave Law,<sup>2</sup> a bill was introduced on June 18 to abolish the circuit court and to establish instead a supreme court, but owing to the lateness of the session, it never came to a vote.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of the decision of the circuit court, Wadsworth yielded not an inch of ground. Taking the attitude that it was not one of the circuit courts to which power had been given to appoint commissioners to act under the Fugitive Slave Law, he in July released negroes imprisoned by Lamon; moreover, in August and again in September he arrested some of Lamon's officers as kidnappers. But for all his zeal and watchfulness it

<sup>1</sup> U. S. *ex rel.* Wm. Copeland.—(Hayward and Hazletine's Reports of the Circuit Court of the D. of C., II, 402.)

<sup>2</sup> Sumner's resolution, introduced May 22, to prevent the seizure of fugitives in the District of Columbia, failed of passage.

<sup>3</sup> Congress did, however, pass an act providing for the education of the colored children in the District and abolishing the black code, and an act remedying defects in the first act of emancipation. By the Emancipation and Confiscation Act, approved July 17, under which such slaves of persons giving aid and comfort to the rebellion as came in any way under the control of the government were freed and the return of fugitives to such masters was prohibited, Wadsworth's hand was strengthened somewhat.

was only in sporadic cases that he could do anything to break the sweep of the Fugitive Slave Law. On October 30, to cite but one of several instances, Commissioner Phillips returned to slavery in Maryland two boys of ten and eleven and a girl of three who had been snatched from their place of refuge the day before under peculiarly distressing circumstances.<sup>1</sup> At the end of Wadsworth's service as military governor, a few weeks later, the civil and the military authorities of the District were as much at odds as ever on this subject, and the disagreement existing there was typical of the divided opinion on the question of Emancipation throughout the North.<sup>2</sup>

✓ In reviewing Wadsworth's anti-slavery activity as military governor of Washington, two things are to be borne in mind. In the first place, the working principle adopted by him that no fugitive should be remanded to slavery without an examination on the part of the military authorities concerning the loyalty of his master—a rule which came to be called the *habeas corpus* of the contraband—was an interpretation of the Confiscation Act of 1861 which, as has been said, was sanctioned by the War Department and which, moreover, was incorporated in the Con-

<sup>1</sup> *National Republican*, November 5.

<sup>2</sup> The newspapers from which I have chiefly drawn this account of Wadsworth's contest with the civil authorities in the District of Columbia are the *Washington National Intelligencer*, *Washington National Republican*, *New York Tribune*, and the *New York Evening Post*.

The outcome of the contest in 1863 is worth narrating. On March 3, by act of Congress, the circuit, district, and criminal courts of the District of Columbia were abolished and a supreme court created in their room. A petition of forty-eight lawyers of the District against the bill had no weight with the Senate, and the debate showed clearly that the reason for the change was in large measure to get rid of the pro-slavery judges. The new court, however, composed of Judges Cartter, of Ohio; Olin, of New York; Fisher, of Delaware; and Wylie, of Virginia, when the first fugitive slave case came before it, was evenly divided as to its power to act. Judge Cartter in a few words stated his conviction that the court had the power, apologizing for his failure to argue the matter by saying: "My brethren, perhaps, can furnish better reasons for their opinion than I can for mine."—(D. of C. Reports, Supreme Court, VI, 11.) The judge who had issued the warrant now made an elaborate argument to prove that he had no right to issue it, and



fiscation Act of July, 1862. In the second place, Wadsworth, who was constantly sought in conference by Lincoln and Stanton on matters both military and political, had throughout the benefit of their suggestion and support. Though eager to take part with his old brigade in McDowell's anticipated advance on Richmond from Fredericksburg, he yielded to their requests to continue in his present position. Lincoln himself knew that his own period of border-State probation could not last long. Foreseeing the day when he himself must join the ranks of the emancipationists, he had no inclination to displace a man of Wadsworth's caliber who was doing all that he could to shape popular opinion in favor of the great war measure that was soon to be. In fine, Wadsworth's career as military governor in this respect is an admirable instance of the distinct public service that can be rendered by a man of individual force and weight who, being independent of the fear of any constituency and careless of consequences to himself, has the rare satisfaction of carrying out, in spite of opposition, what he himself feels to be right and necessary. Of such cases during the Civil War there were none too many.

To pass to other duties of Wadsworth's office: his general watch over residents of the adjoining counties

discharged the fugitive. When the negro attempted to leave the court-room, however, a scuffle ensued over him between his master and Dean, his lawyer. Dean was arrested on a charge of obstructing the operation of the Fugitive Slave Law, though he was never brought to trial; the negro was delivered to the military authorities and obtained his freedom by enlisting in a colored regiment. On the next day the court appointed a commissioner to hear fugitive slave cases. Dean protested against the appointment in vain, and the commissioner was returning slaves to their masters as late as November, 1863.—(See *National Intelligencer*, November 19, 1863.) But the enlistment of colored troops in Maryland under an order by which an owner could obtain three hundred dollars for every slave whom he allowed to become a soldier reduced considerably the number of fugitives after this time. The Fugitive Slave Law, like Charles II, was an unconscionable time a-dying, and the courts of the District of Columbia, having exhausted all their remedies, stood by the bedside of the expiring patient and nursed it till the end with tender and assiduous care. Slavery was abolished in Maryland in October, 1864; the fugitive slave laws were repealed on June 28, 1864.

of Maryland and Virginia, maintained, as has already been indicated, so that the Federal government might not suffer from treason enveloping the capital, was a part of his task that required the constant exercise of vigor and tact. The record of his activities along this line is considerable, though not in detail particularly illuminating. It included such acts as sending to Leesburg, Virginia, to break up the sessions of a court held there under Confederate laws; releasing a jailful of fugitive slaves at the same place; searching out Maryland planters who had been active in giving help to deserters from the Army of the Potomac; arresting as hostages citizens of Alexandria and Fredericksburg. The Old Capitol Prison, where all such political prisoners were confined, was also under his charge, and in his control of its inmates he tempered with humanity as far as he might the strict justice which the situation required. Some of the prisoners had been seized in retaliation for seizures of Union non-combatants made by the Confederate authorities; some were in truth guilty of treason; but all were insistent in asserting the injustice of their imprisonment and in demanding release. In informing himself as to the merits of each of these cases, in helping the prisoners to communicate with their friends, and in attending to their exchange or release, Wadsworth consumed many hours.

The story of his treatment of one of these prisoners may be told in illustration of this part of his work; moreover, it has a sequel in which the bread he cast upon the waters was returned in a fashion as moving as it was miraculous. Patrick McCracken, living on a small farm on the outskirts of that forest region beyond Fredericksburg destined to a double fame from the battles of Chancellorsville and the Wilderness, was brought to Washington as a spy and imprisoned. Wadsworth, investigating the circumstances, learned of his hard-working life, heard the need that family and farm

had of him, and, believing that the stability of the national government would in nowise be threatened by the freedom of this poor white, let him go, receiving from him a promise that he would, as far as lay within his power, withhold aid from the Confederacy. For Wadsworth the incident ended there: the thought of the man thus befriended in the course of the day's work probably never again crossed his consciousness. But the gratitude of McCracken, biding its time, found at last the opportunity for which it had been waiting.

Not only for political offenders had Wadsworth responsibility but also for prisoners captured on the field of battle. From the nature of the case the treatment of prisoners must be one of the weak spots of warfare, even when war is conducted, to quote the language of one of McClellan's circulars, "upon the highest principles known to Christian civilization";<sup>1</sup> and it was not till July 22, 1862, that a cartel of exchange was agreed to between the Union and the Confederate authorities. When an exchange was about to be negotiated through General Dix stationed at Fortress Monroe, Wadsworth provided him with lists of Union soldiers in the hands of the Confederates and, at the proper time, despatched to Fortress Monroe the Confederate prisoners about Washington. He it was, too, who received the wasted boys in blue, numerically deemed their equivalents.<sup>2</sup>

Then there were the sick and wounded soldiers. Of the twenty-one thousand who during July and August, after McClellan's defeat in the Peninsula, had been sent in transports and hospital ships to ports in the North,<sup>3</sup> Washington had its share. Though the provision there for them was hopelessly inadequate, Stanton nevertheless issued an order<sup>4</sup> putting a stop to the

<sup>1</sup> W. R., XI, pt. 3, p. 364.

<sup>2</sup> Three thousand eight hundred and forty-five sick and wounded prisoners, received in exchange or on parole, were sent to Washington and other Northern cities between July 15 and August 3.—(W. R., XI, pt. 1, p. 215.)

<sup>3</sup> Report of Medical Director Letterman.—(W. R., XI, pt. 1, pp. 212, 216.)

<sup>4</sup> G. O. No. 78, July 14, published in *National Republican*, July 26.

practice of granting furloughs to wounded men and requiring them to remain where they were. The discovery by Lincoln and Stanton of the astonishing depletion of McClellan's army through absences unaccounted<sup>1</sup> for was the immediate occasion of this severe requirement; yet in many a case it caused most unnecessary suffering. The story of Wadsworth's successful protest is told by Colonel Clinton H. Meneely, who at the time was serving as aide on his staff:

The hospitals in and around Washington were filled with sick and wounded soldiers, and the disabled officers had to get accommodation, if such it could be called, in miserable quarters, everything being crowded. General Wadsworth was personally acquainted with some of the officers who, though wounded in battle, were yet able to travel, and who were confined in wretched buildings. He went to the War Department with the request that any and all of these officers be allowed to go to their homes. The reply was that it would take fully two weeks to get the proper surgical certificates made out, thus holding the officers in the city all of that time; and one red-tape official said that some of the officers, thus removed from Washington, might desert. The ready answer of General Wadsworth to this last statement was that the quicker men of that character deserted, the better for the service; and he readily persuaded President Lincoln to have an order issued at once that all wounded and sick officers could go to their homes immediately after leaving their names and addresses at headquarters. The suffering officers left the city in a few hours' time, as might be imagined. One young man whose home was in General Wadsworth's own town, and who had been compelled to take shelter in a sweltering room over a noisy saloon, showed General Wadsworth a spent bullet which had broken his jaw and lodged itself under his tongue, and he *wrote* his "thank you" as he started to meet his mother in his New York home.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Lincoln's letter to McClellan of July 13.—(W. R., XI, pt. 3, p. 319.)

<sup>2</sup> From a private letter.

Another officer, Captain James McMillan, convalescing from "Chickahominy fever" at Long Branch, was stung into going back to Washington by reading articles in the newspapers assailing men at home on sick leave. Wadsworth, meeting him on the street and learning that he was proposing to go to the front, told him that he was going to his grave instead, took him before the Secretary of War, and obtained an order detailing him for duty in Detroit.<sup>1</sup> Many similar incidents that are preserved show how constant were these acts of kindly care, all the result of individual initiative cutting across the tangle of official red tape.

Through the North the summer of 1862 was a season of renewed consecration. Lincoln's calls for three hundred thousand volunteers for three years and three hundred thousand for nine months, made necessary by the failure of McClellan's Peninsula campaign, brought home to every man of military age the ultimate question of patriotism. The following correspondence between father and son is typical of the fashion in which the depths were sounded in many a family:

GENESEO, Sunday, Aug. 10, '62.

MY DEAR FATHER:—

I write you this to inform you of the fact that I commenced yesterday recruiting in Buffalo for the new Buffalo Regiment with the intention of going myself when the company is full as First Lieutenant.

My dear Father, I have taken this determination from a sense of duty to my country and hope most sincerely that it will meet with your approval as I think it will.

When I wrote you two weeks ago you said you could not advise me to go but would write again. From this I inferred that you were undecided on the subject, and did not wish to say *yes* or *no*. I am an able-bodied

<sup>1</sup> Letter of Mrs. McMillan to J. W. Wadsworth.

young man and all such should immediately rally around the flag of our country in this her greatest hour of peril.

I have no family whose daily bread depends upon my exertions and therefore am not exempt in any manner from the call of my country for volunteers to save and preserve her from disaster and utter ruin. . . .

In raising this company I have associated with me Mr. John Higgins, an officer of the Buffalo Tigers, . . . who sacrifices more than I do to save his country. He will be captain of the company. We have only this next week to raise the company, as drafting will then commence. We have already recruited about twenty men. We have already received our permits to recruit from Albany. Mother is quite reconciled to my going and I hope, my dear Father, that you will not be displeased with this act of

Your affectionate son,  
CHARLES F. WADSWORTH.<sup>1</sup>

WASHINGTON, D. C.  
*August 13, 1862.*

MY DEAR SON:—

I have just received your letter of the 10th. I approve of your determination to enter the service and the honorable reasons you give for taking this step. It is sad for your dear mother to have all of us exposed to the hazards of war, but if the poor and those with limited means leave their families to the charity of their neighbors or to the uncertain chances of employment, there is little reason for our remaining at home.

I like too your taking the modest position of Lieutenant. It is really the post you are at present best fitted to fill, and there is not much patriotism in seeking an honorable position before you have earned it.

I will pay an extra bounty of ten dollars to all who join your company. Show this to Mr. Janes and he will advance the funds. If you go into this business give your whole heart and time to it. Get your com-

<sup>1</sup> Charles F. Wadsworth was commissioned first lieutenant in the 116th New York Volunteers, and later became captain. He served under Banks in the Department of the Gulf, was present at the siege of Port Hudson, and was brevetted major "for gallant and meritorious services during the war."



pany organized as soon as possible and join one of the first regiments coming to the field. Study the "Tactics" thoroughly and the Army Regulations, and make yourself master of all your duties.

God bless you, my dear son,

Your affectionate father,

J. S. W.

✓ But this passion of sacrifice was ever troubled by the question, To what end? Was it for Union alone, or was it for Union and Freedom? To Horace Greeley's "Prayer of Twenty Millions" asking for Emancipation, Lincoln replied with the baffling, balanced phrases of a leader who is still waiting for the hour to strike. On this point the strife of factions in the Republican party threatened to rend the organization in twain. In Washington, where the strife was heightened and complicated by the ardor of McClellan's opponents and followers, the military and political cross-currents made a confusion to tax the skill of the adroitest navigator. The walls of Wadsworth's office in the old mansion at the corner of Madison Place and Pennsylvania Avenue gave back the sound of many imprecations uttered by Kearney, Hooker, and other officers in reciting the disasters of McClellan's army. Thither came the green-goggled Polish exile Gurowski, idealist and newsmonger; the sting of his tongue spared few men in public life, but for Wadsworth he had nothing but praise.<sup>1</sup> The Washington correspondents of the great dailies knew the place well, and the anti-slavery readers of the *New York Tribune*, through the diligence of A. S. Hill,<sup>2</sup> could follow from day to day the story of Wadsworth's fight to keep his contrabands clear of the clutches of the Fugitive Slave Law. When, as in Hill's case, the journalist had Wadsworth's confidence, he obtained glimpses of that inner world of politics where

<sup>1</sup> The last volume of Gurowski's Diary, published after Wadsworth's death, is dedicated to his memory.

<sup>2</sup> Later professor of English at Harvard.

impatience, half-knowledge, and suspicion were playing havoc with the loyalty of devoted men, who, though all working toward one great end, were not yet in accord as to the means. The following extracts from Hill's letters to Sydney Howard Gay, managing editor of the *Tribune*, are quoted by Mr. Rhodes in his history:

General Wadsworth says that in all the councils of war which he attended he never heard a word of economy, never from President, secretary of war, chief of ordnance, or General Meigs. Millions of money were to them as to ordinary men star distances; whether two or three hundred billions of miles, what difference?<sup>1</sup>

Ten minutes' talk last night with General Wadsworth. The result this: he is cheerful in view of military prospects, but thinks political signs gloomy. I value his testimony because he has, as he says, been with the President and Stanton every day at the War Department—frequently for five or six hours—during several months. He says that the President is not with us; has no anti-slavery instincts. He never heard him speak of anti-slavery men otherwise than as "radicals," "abolitionists"; and of the "nigger question" he frequently speaks. Talking against McClellan with Blair, in Lincoln's presence, Wadsworth was met by Blair with the remark, "He'd have been all right if he'd stolen a couple of niggers." A general laugh, in which Lincoln laughed, as if it were an argument. Wadsworth believes that if emancipation comes at all it will be from the rebels, or in consequence of their protracting the war.<sup>2</sup>

This political and military coil, however, gave way to the demands of the moment for the safety of Washington, when, late in August, Lee pushed Pope back toward the capital and engaged him in the second battle of Bull Run. For four days, while direct communication with the army was entirely cut off,<sup>3</sup> the city thrilled with the painful excitement of a battle in progress thirty

<sup>1</sup> Rhodes, *History of the U. S.*, IV, 208, foot-note.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 64, foot-note.

<sup>3</sup> Ropes, II, 317.



miles away. At Alexandria McClellan was forwarding troops to Pope with such slowness as to raise serious suspicion of his good-will; and Herman Haupt, the man who, as Lincoln said, "could build a bridge of bean-poles and corn-stalks,"<sup>1</sup> was working day and night to repair the railroad to Manassas. In Washington contrabands and stragglers from the army were arriving, coming in throngs over the bridges like harbingers of the approach of the Confederate hosts; to the call for nurses to go to the battle-field, department clerks responded by the hundred; surgeons by the hundred, too, began to arrive from the cities of the North; Wadsworth seized all the available vehicles in the city and despatched them under a cavalry guard to Centreville to bring back the wounded.

With the positive news of Pope's disaster and his retreat upon the city, uncertainty gave place to alarm. Orders were given for the removal to New York of most of the contents of the arsenal, and Wadsworth was instructed to form the clerks and employees in the public buildings into companies and to provide them with arms and ammunition.<sup>2</sup> McClellan had been restored to the command of the Army of the Potomac, but the disorganization of the troops and the mystery of Lee's movements in the days following the battle sharpened the edge of apprehension. Halleck, the nervous and pedantic general-in-chief, had fears of a night raid of the enemy's cavalry into the city; as late as September 7 Secretary Chase "found Stanton, Pope, and Wadsworth uneasy on account of critical condition of affairs."<sup>3</sup> On the next day he wrote in his diary: "Barney, collector of New York, came in, and said that Stanton and Wadsworth had advised him to leave for New York this evening, as communication with Baltimore might be cut off before to-morrow. . . . Went to War Department, where found

<sup>1</sup> Nicolay and Hay, VI, 16.

<sup>2</sup> W. R., XII, pt. 3, pp. 802, 805, 807.

<sup>3</sup> Chase's Diary.—(Annual Report of the American Historical Association, 1902, II, 68.)

the President, Stanton, and Wadsworth. The President said he had felt badly all day. Wadsworth said there was no danger of an attack on Washington, and that the men ought to be severely punished who intimated the possibility of its surrender."

His conviction that Washington was in no danger was soon justified; within a day or so it was almost certain that Lee, having entered Maryland, was in the vicinity of Frederick City, forty miles away. But Wadsworth's care concerning the safety of the city, engrossing though it had been, troubled him less than the thought of the part played by military jealousies and bad generalship in bringing disaster upon the Union army. As the news of the defeats on the Peninsula had caused him many a sleepless night, so now the disgrace of this recent defeat at Bull Run set him pacing up and down his office, trying to master his agony of distress at the sacrifice of human lives required by men unable to subdue love of self to love of country. It is the penalty of the patriot that his keenest suffering is caused by the dearth of patriotism in others.

In this year of Emancipation still another call came to Wadsworth to champion the cause of anti-slavery for men who were trying to place the issue of the war squarely on the basis of freedom. As candidate of the Union Republicans for governor in the fall campaign in New York, he stood before the whole country representing what was demanded by the radical wing of the party.

Having declined the nomination for governor in 1860, in order that Morgan might have a second term, Wadsworth would naturally be the candidate in 1862, other things being equal. His own feeling on this point he expressed in a letter written August 22 to James C. Smith, of Canandaigua, who had been his comrade in politics ever since the Barnburner days of 1848.

WASHINGTON, D. C., August 22, 1862.

MY DEAR SIR:—

. . . I do not find any sufficient reason for absolutely refusing to accept the nomination for governor, but I unaffectedly dread it, and *long* to be at home and rid of public cares. While I do not seriously doubt that I can get on reasonably well with the ordinary duties of the office, I know that a candidate coming in by common consent, as it were, must disappoint many of his supporters. "Availability" is very pleasant while running, but greatly increases the embarrassment of executing the duties of an office.

I have another objection to being a candidate: I wish you to go to the Senate, not for your own sake, but because I believe you are the fittest man. My election would interfere with this on the ground that we are both from the same geographical section. This is really an objection of no force, but it would be made to have a good deal of influence.

I have tried to be ordered to the field, in which case I should peremptorily decline the nomination; but I have not been successful, partly I think because the Secretary of War wishes me to accept the nomination. He is out and out of our views on the slavery question, and wishes New York to stand unequivocal in that question. Who would be, or could be, nominated, if I were out of the way, and what do you advise?

I may add that I am doing, as I think, some good here, and in certain contingencies I may be able to do more good here than even in the exalted position referred to.

Please write me frankly.

Truly yours,

JAMES S. WADSWORTH.

P. S. I feel that this last hasty request is quite unnecessary and hardly polite.

This letter, giving with directness and without reserve Wadsworth's own views about his nomination, shows also that, absorbed in his military duties, he had taken little pains to keep in touch with the intricate state of politics at home. The differences between the

two factions in the Republican party in New York, resulting from the defeat of Seward at Chicago in 1860 and the thwarting of Horace Greeley's senatorial aspirations in 1861, had been kept somewhat in abeyance since the outbreak of the war, but now were in danger of bursting out again. To prevent this evil, Thurlow Weed, just returned from abroad, where with good effect he had been presenting the cause of the Union to European powers, now endeavored by his skill to bring about a temporary alliance of the Republican and the Democratic parties on a basis,—support of the President and the Constitution, and prosecution of the war,—that would appeal to the moderate members of each. By this shrewd device he hoped to dominate the radical faction of his own party and to silence its insistent clamor for Emancipation. The man who, he proposed, should receive the joint nomination for governor from the two parties was John A. Dix, a War Democrat and one of the most distinguished citizens of the State, who had continued in the military service from the time of his appointment as major-general, soon after the beginning of the war, and who was now in command at Fortress Monroe. An understanding between Weed and his long-time enemy, Bennett, of the *New York Herald*, resulted in their bringing forward the scheme for discussion in the columns of their respective newspapers;<sup>1</sup> but when the Democratic convention met on September 10, its course in rejecting Dix and choosing Horatio Seymour, a vigorous partisan assailant of the administration, put an end to all projects for such a combination.

While the course of affairs in New York was thus indirectly preparing the way for the nomination of Wadsworth, the stirring succession of military events in front of Washington was having the effect of causing him to set his face against the project. Since he had written

<sup>1</sup>Diary of Gideon Welles, I, 78; Brummer's Political History of New York State during the Civil War, p. 203.

his letter of August 22, Pope had been defeated at Bull Run, Washington had been in danger of attack, Lee with his victorious army had invaded Maryland. Cannon-ading within hearing of the Capitol had quickened Wadsworth's blood, and when matched against its thunder the call of political duties at home was far and faint. His eagerness to be at hand, ready for active service, together with the possibility of duty where his anti-slavery sympathies would have full scope, inspired the letter which he wrote to Smith four days before McClellan met Lee at Antietam.

WASHINGTON, D. C., *Sept. 13, '62.*

MY DEAR SMITH:—

✓ I find myself growing quite nervous as the day for the gathering of our convention approaches. I sincerely trust that my friends or my enemies will give the nomination some other direction. I do not like the idea of leaving the military service at this time, or of leaving the Capital. While my main duties are unimportant I hold a position which gives me some influence here which I do not like to relinquish. I should probably be succeeded by a pro-slavery general; moreover, great changes have got to be made in the command of the army before any good will come of it. While I should not anticipate or desire any very responsible position, in the event of these changes I might find a position where I could render service in the line which I prefer and which would carry me "down South" where Military Governorships will be *plenty* and of some avail.<sup>1</sup> I trust that you and my other friends who may meet at our convention will well consider the matter in this point of view.

But if I am to be nominated let me have a strong, decided platform. If you do not I shall surely kick it over when I accept. I have come to think that the

<sup>1</sup> Wadsworth refers to the plan of appointing a military governor and three judges for every district occupied by the Union troops, the district to be extended as the troops advanced till it embraced a State. A bill embodying this plan was reported in the Senate by the judiciary committee, in the summer of 1862, but was not brought to a vote.—(See Schucker's Chase, p. 381.)

Rebellion can only and ought only to end in the total overthrow of slavery. This is a severe ordeal to pass through, but let us meet it like men and not leave it to our children, with the inheritance of debt and taxation we are laying up for them. I have no fears of the "St. Domingo Massacres" which are held up to us as the certain results of emancipation, but it would be a terrible revolution to the whites of the South and the merchants of the North. Still, let it come now, whatever it may be, and let us have an end of this infamy. The blacks are the most docile people on the face of the earth; they will make the most innocent if not the most industrious peasantry, and we shall recover from the shock sooner than we dare to hope. But cost what it may, I say again let us meet it now. We have paid for peace and freedom in the blood of our sons; let us have it.

Truly yours,  
JAMES S. WADSWORTH. ✓

This letter, it is to be noted, was written three days after the nomination of Seymour by the Democrats. Meanwhile Weed, his first scheme having failed, had begun to consider Wadsworth's availability and, so roundabout were the ways of New York politics, proceeded to sound him through Secretary Chase. "Long talk with Weed," wrote Chase in his diary of September 15. "He expressed again his conviction that more decided measures are needed in an anti-slavery direction, and said that there was much dissatisfaction with Seward in New York because he is supposed to be adverse to such measures."<sup>1</sup> A few days later a letter from Hiram Barney, in New York, to Chase put Weed's position in a practical form. Weed was willing, it seemed, to make Wadsworth's nomination unanimous if it were "not to be considered as a triumph over him,"—an expression which might well be interpreted to mean that, in return for Weed's support, Wadsworth would be expected to yield in the matter of the platform.

<sup>1</sup> Report of the American Historical Association, 1902, II, 83.



Barney's letter, as it happened, reached Chase on the morning of September 22, and before going to that cabinet meeting which, in Mr. Rhodes's words, is "a point in the history of civilization," he sent an invitation to Wadsworth to come to dinner and talk the matter over. In the evening the secretary, having first made in his diary the record to which posterity chiefly owes its knowledge of the historic scene when Lincoln announced to his advisers his intention of issuing the proclamation of Emancipation—having made this record, Chase noted the outcome of the other matter upon which he had been engaged. His guest, it seemed, had quickly detected the implication in Weed's phrase.

Wadsworth had but one objection to saying he would be governor, if at all, of the State and not of a section of a party: which was that it might be considered as in some sort a pledge, which he would not give to anybody. Told Wadsworth in confidence that the proclamation might be expected to-morrow morning—which surprised and gratified him equally.<sup>1</sup>

As it turned out it was Lincoln's change of attitude on the subject of Emancipation that determined Wadsworth's nomination. In the convention, meeting when the news of the proclamation was barely forty-eight hours old, the Greeley and the anti-slavery men had things their own way. Since to support the policy of Emancipation was now to support the President, they were in no mood to listen to the counsels of the moderates and under no necessity to bargain for their help. Weed, who on the failure of his overtures to Wadsworth had renewed his advocacy of Dix, could make no headway against the cry for a leader who could rally the State to strengthen the hands of the President in his new policy. On the first ballot Wadsworth was nominated, two hundred and thirty-four votes having gone

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 90.

to him, while Dix received only one hundred and ten.<sup>1</sup> Governor Morgan's name was not brought before the convention. The platform adopted was such that there was no danger of Wadsworth's attempting to kick it over.

The nomination of Wadsworth was received with enthusiasm and his election regarded as certain.<sup>2</sup> In his letter of acceptance and in a speech<sup>3</sup> to a group of serenaders who came to his house, Wadsworth indicated in unequivocal terms his position on Emancipation and the prosecution of the war. Having put himself publicly on record, he declared that military duties prevented his leaving Washington to stump the State; the campaign must go on without help from him.

Almost immediately, however, it became plain that there was to be a lively contest. Seymour and his followers began a series of partisan attacks on the administration. Emancipation was condemned as "a proposal for the butchery of women and children, for scenes of lust and rapine, and of arson and murder, which would invoke the interference of civilized Europe."<sup>4</sup> Corrupt contracts and arbitrary arrests were violently denounced.<sup>5</sup> To these attacks Raymond, in the *New York Times*, and Greeley, in the *Tribune*, made vigorous reply. On both sides the blows were shrewd and in the heat of the strife personalities were soon mingled with policies as the subject-matter of debate. Wadsworth's record as land-owner and soldier was vilified with abundant use of superlatives; the polls, it was said, was the only place where this general would not run well. "Prince John" Van Buren,

<sup>1</sup> Alexander's Political History of N. Y., III, 45.

<sup>2</sup> For Gideon Welles's gossip concerning the nomination, see his Diary, I, 154, 162.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendices F and G.

<sup>4</sup> Political History of New York, II, 40.

<sup>5</sup> Lincoln on September 24 had issued a proclamation withdrawing the right of *habeas corpus* from all who "discouraged enlistments" or were guilty of any "disloyal practice" which gave "aid and comfort to the rebels."—(Lincoln's Works, II, 239.)



appearing from retirement to delight audiences with his wit, and to anger opponents by his misrepresentation and malice, did not spare the Republican-Union candidate. As sometimes happens when men who have been friends become political opponents, he forgot to fight fair, and ridiculed Wadsworth's military career as insignificant—that of a mere “militia major.” Wadsworth was also attacked for his alleged interference with McClellan's plans; on the other side, Seymour was made to smart from repeated accusations of treason. The intensity of the conflict, all the sharper because the contestants stood at the extremes of the two parties, at last began to alarm Republicans and Democrats occupying the middle ground where, according to the proverb, the way is safest. Fearing not only defeat in the election but party disruption as well, some of them now urged that both candidates should withdraw in order that General Dix might take the field alone. Even those who proposed the scheme must have realized that there was little hope of its success; and when the sturdy old soldier replied that he could not leave his post at Fortress Monroe “to be drawn into any party strife,”<sup>1</sup> they resigned themselves to party strife again.

The managers of Wadsworth's campaign, perceiving that the party was likely to suffer from lukewarm allegiance<sup>2</sup> as well as from active opposition, arranged for a mass-meeting at Cooper Institute, in New York City, on the evening of October 30, a few days before the election, and put before Wadsworth with all urgency the need of his attendance. Heeding their importunities, he obtained leave from his duties in Washington and came. On his arrival in New York, so the story is told in the

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs of John A. Dix, II, 51.

<sup>2</sup> “The difficulty has been,” so ran a letter to Wadsworth from the headquarters of the State committee on November 1, “to create enthusiasm among our friends. They had been exhausted by the war excitement, and it took extraordinary effort to wake up the friends from the lethargy in which they all seemed buried.”

Life of Thurlow Weed, he went to Weed's room at the Astor House. Weed said to him: "'James, for the first time in my life, I am not glad to see you,' adding, in explanation, 'you have been sent for to make an abolition speech. You will do it, and thus throw away the State.'" <sup>1</sup> As the event proved, Weed spoke from the fulness of knowledge possessed by a ripened politician; but Wadsworth had passed the point where he could accept such guidance. A man who for the last six months had been devoting himself heart and soul to caring for contrabands and to fighting the Fugitive Slave Law could fill his speech with eloquent silence on the subject of slavery only at the price of utter self-stultification. As he faced the great audience in Cooper Union, he met Weed's challenge in the same steady spirit that had moved him when he wrote to Smith: "Let us have an end of this infamy. . . . We have paid for peace and freedom in the blood of our sons; let us have it."

Here is his "abolition speech":<sup>2</sup>

The man who pauses to think of himself, his affairs, of his family, even, when he has public duties to perform and his country lies prostrate, almost in the agonies of dissolution, is not the man to save it. We must lay aside all subordinate considerations and raise ourselves to fix our minds upon the true magnitude of the question which we have to solve. We must look directly in the face the deadly peril which surrounds us if we would save the country. I tell you it is my deliberate and solemn conviction that here in the State of New York—here, more even than in the Shenandoah and in the valleys of Kentucky—is the battle being fought which is to preserve our liberties and perpetuate our country. [Applause.] I do not propose to enter largely into the consideration of many of the questions involved in this canvass; following the able and eloquent speaker whom you have just heard, who has referred to some points upon which I had intended to comment in terms which I could

<sup>1</sup> Life of Weed, II, 425.

<sup>2</sup> Compiled from the reports in the New York papers of October 31.

not command, I shall glance hastily at a few of the leading points at issue.

You hear it charged by my opponents that our national administration is incompetent to manage the affairs of the country in this crisis. I do not propose to enter into an elaborate defence of the administration. I am not of the administration: I am only its subordinate officer, its humble and, I trust, its faithful servant. [Great applause.] Look, for a moment, at the circumstances under which this administration took up the reins of power. James Buchanan [murmurs of indignation] and the thieves and traitors who gathered around him had left the country a hopeless wreck, almost in the struggle of death. Under these trying circumstances, Abraham Lincoln [enthusiastic applause], an able, honest, inexperienced man, came to the aid of the government. I do not doubt that his warmest friends, and the warmest friends of his cabinet officers, will admit that mistakes have been committed—and considerable mistakes; but that they have labored faithfully and earnestly to save this country, I can myself bear witness. [Applause.] And I do not believe that even in this heated canvass any man has dared to stand up before you and say that Abraham Lincoln was not an honest man, trying to save his country. What do these gentlemen propose? Do they intend to supersede the administration by a revolution? The more audacious among them have dared to hint it. If they dared openly to avow it they would be covered with infamy, and would not receive one in a thousand of the votes which will now be given by unreflecting men for their ticket. Does it need argument to prove that if this rebellion is put down at all it must be done within the two years and a few months during which Mr. Lincoln must administer the government?

What, then, can any honest patriot, whose heart looks alone to the preservation of his country, do to sustain and strengthen Abraham Lincoln? Advise him; admonish him, if you will—and I tell you no man receives the plain talk of honest men, whether political friends or opponents, with more pleasure and more courtesy than Abraham Lincoln—admonish him, if you will, but strengthen and sustain him. [Applause.] Give him

your lives and fortunes and sacred honor to aid his honest efforts to put down this rebellion, and I venture to promise that before the end of his term the sun will shine upon a land unbroken in its territorial integrity [applause], undiminished in its great proportions, a land of peace, a land of prosperity, a land where labor is everywhere honorable and the soil is everywhere free. [Great applause.]

Mr. Lincoln has told you that he would save this country with slavery if he could, and he would save it without slavery if he could; he has never said to you that if he could not save slavery he would let his country go. [Applause.] I believe that that honest patriot would rather be thrown into a molten furnace than utter a sentiment so infamous. He has said to those in rebellion against the United States: "I give you one hundred days to return to your allegiance; if you fail to do that, I shall strike from under you that institution which some of you seem to think dearer than life, than liberty, than country, than peace." And some of us, let me add, appear to entertain the same opinion. Gentlemen, I stand by Abraham Lincoln. [Tremendous applause.] It is just, it is holy so to do. I ask you to stand by him and sustain him in his efforts. [We will; we will.]

I know, for I have sometimes felt, the influence of the odium which the spurious aristocracy, who have so largely directed the destinies of this nation for three-quarters of a century, have attached to the word "abolition." They have treated it, and too often taught us to treat it, as some low, vulgar crime, not to be spoken of in good society or mentioned in fashionable parlors. I know there are many men still influenced by this prejudice; but let those who, in this hour of peril, this struggle of life and death, shrink from that odium stand aside. The events of this hour are too big for them. They may escape ridicule, but they cannot escape contempt. Their descendants, as they read the annals of these times and find the names of their ancestors nowhere recorded among those who came to the rescue of their government in the hour of its greatest trial, will blush for shame. [Applause.]

You are told by the candidates of this anti-war

party which is springing up that they will give you peace in ninety days. I believe them. They will give you peace—but, good God, what a peace! A peace which breaks your country into fragments; a Mexican peace; a Spanish-American peace; a peace which inaugurates eternal war! [Applause.] What peace can they give you in ninety days or in any other time which does not acknowledge the Southern Confederacy and cut your country in twain? Let me ask you, for a moment, if you ever looked at the map of your country which it is proposed to bring out—this new and improved map of Seymour, Van Buren & Co., the map of these “let ’em go” geographers? [Laughter.] A country three thousand miles long and a few hundred miles wide in the middle. Why, they could not make such a country stand until they got their map lithographed; nay, not even until they got it photographed. [Renewed laughter.] All the great watercourses, all the great channels of trade dissevered in the middle. No, the mandate of nature, the finger of God is against any such disseverance of this country. It can never be divided by the slave line or any other line.

If you are not prepared to acknowledge the independence of the Southern Confederacy and take this peace which is offered to you in ninety days, what are the other alternatives presented to you? The South has unanimously declared that she will submit to no restoration of the Union, that she will under no circumstances come back into the Union. What, then, are we to do? We must either go over and join them and adopt their laws and their social system, or we must subjugate them to our laws and to our system. Abraham Lincoln tells you that he intends to subjugate them. Your soldiers in the field say that they intend to subjugate them. [Applause.] Sleeping to-night upon the cold ground as they are, to sleep to-morrow, perhaps, upon the battle-field, to sleep in death forever, they say: “Surrender never!” [Great applause.] Gentlemen, what do you say? Do you propose to surrender? [No, no, never!] What is to be the voice of New York upon this question? Is it to carry cheering words to those brave and suffering soldiers? Is it to reanimate and encourage them? Or is it to tell them that their State is against

them and against their cause? And what of the gallant dead? What of those who have fallen in battle, or fallen by disease, in thousands and tens of thousands? Have they been sacrificed all in vain? Have they been sacrificed in an unnecessary, as Mr. Seymour would say, and unprofitable war? Are these the words which we are to carry to those hearts made desolate by this war? to the fathers and mothers, to the wives and children of the heroic dead? No, gentlemen, never! Let Mr. Seymour say to them, if he has the heart to say it, that they fell in an unnecessary war; I shall say no such thing. When it is my lot to meet any of them, I shall say: "Your kinsman fell in a glorious cause; he gave his life to save the life of his country in a war forced upon him by a selfish, savage, brutal aristocracy. All honor to him; all honor to his name; and may a merciful God mitigate the afflictions of those who mourn."

I said at the commencement of my remarks that if we would meet this issue properly we must appreciate the imminence of the peril. I tell you now that here in New York you stand face to face with the enemy. Here are the minions, the instruments, the tools of that aristocracy to which I have referred. Here, too, are the agents and here, too, is the money of that other sympathetic aristocracy upon the other side of the Atlantic, those people who, while talking of peace and neutrality, have sent out armed vessels to prey upon your commerce and take captive your seamen. As your soldiers stand upon the hills of Antietam and the plains of Manassas, so you stand here, face to face with your enemy.

I know, gentlemen, that on ordinary occasions there might be some question raised as to the expediency of a candidate's indulging in speculations on the result; but, having divested myself of all personal feeling in regard to this matter, I shall speak of it as I would if I were not a candidate.

It is fifteen months since I have stood upon the soil of New York until this evening; but in that time I have seen as much and perhaps more of the sons of New York than I should if I had remained at home. I have seen them on the battle-field, flushed with victory; I have seen them dismayed with defeat; I have seen them sleeping on the frozen ground; I have seen them suffer-



ing and dying in the hospitals. I claim, gentlemen, to know as well as any man knows what race of men come from New York, and I tell you that they do not intend to give up [great applause]; they do not intend to surrender; they do not intend to let their country go. [Applause.] You will perhaps, gentlemen, when you get the returns from some of the election districts near you, be somewhat alarmed. But wait, gentlemen, wait till you hear from the hills of Saint Lawrence on the north; wait till you hear from the hills of Allegany on the south, wait till you hear from the valleys of the Mohawk, Cayuga, Onondaga, and Genesee; wait till you hear from them, gentlemen, and you will hear a voice which will bring joy and glad tidings to every loyal heart in this land, and make it cry out: "The country is saved!" [Renewed cheers.]

Gentlemen, I only propose to detain you a moment longer. [Go on! Go on!] Let me say to you, gentlemen, that if we meet this great crisis in which an overruling Providence has assigned it to us to act, if we meet it as becomes men, if we shape our course so that we may appeal to the God of Justice to smile upon our arms and upon our councils, I tell you, gentlemen, that the glories of the Revolutionary period, even, will pale before the achievements of your soldiers and your statesmen. [Great applause.]

I will not detain you any further, gentlemen; and I thank you for the great patience with which you have heard me. [Enthusiastic applause, the audience rising and waving handkerchiefs.]

The immediate effect of the speech is described by Alexander in his *Political History of New York*:<sup>1</sup>

Amid a hurricane of approbation he mingled censure of Seymour with praise of Lincoln, and the experience of a brave soldier with bitter criticism of an unpatriotic press. It was not the work of a trained public speaker. It lacked poise, phrase, and deliberation. But what it wanted in manner it made up in fire and directness, giving an emotional and loyal audience abundant opportunity to explode into long-continued cheering. Thoughtful

<sup>1</sup> III, 50, 51.

men who were not in any sense political partisans gave careful heed to his words. He stood for achievement. He brought the great struggle nearer home, and men listened as to one with a message from the field of patriotic sacrifices. The radical newspapers broke into a chorus of applause. The Radicals themselves were delighted. The air rung with praises of the courage and spirit of their candidate, and if here and there the faint voice of a Conservative suggested that emancipation was premature and arbitrary arrests were unnecessary, a shout of offended patriotism drowned the ignoble utterance.

One point in this speech calls for further remark. Its characterization of Lincoln shows how Wadsworth, like every other man who saw enough of the President to learn his ways and to find the fire of his sincerity steadily burning behind its baffling defences of jocular-ity, had outgrown and repudiated the distrust felt in the days of ignorance. The story of the cabinet meeting of September 22, as told by Chase to Wadsworth at dinner on that day, could not fail to win the lasting allegiance of a nature so ardent as Wadsworth's. It was this revelation that inspired the words: "I stand by Abraham Lincoln. It is just; it is holy so to do."

To the Radicals, confident in the righteousness of their cause and looking so far ahead to the time of its ultimate consummation that their vision of immediate conditions was distorted, the result of the election was nothing short of astounding. Seymour had a majority of over ten thousand votes.<sup>1</sup> Thereupon ensued much discussion between the wings of the Union party as to the cause of the defeat, each side considering that it had a grievance against the other. According to H. B. Stanton, the anti-slavery journalist, Wadsworth believed that Seward was "dead against him all through the cam-

<sup>1</sup> The vote stood: Seymour, 307,063; Wadsworth, 296,492.—*New York Tribune*, November 24.



paign.”<sup>1</sup> As for Weed, he made public announcement of his “steady and earnest support”<sup>2</sup> of the whole State ticket; but so high had feeling run that for some time he suffered, as he himself notes in his Autobiography,<sup>3</sup> from the suspicion that he had worked to defeat Wadsworth.

But not personal and factional interests, nor dissatisfaction at corrupt contracts and arbitrary arrests, nor the absence of the soldier vote, contributing causes though they were, are adequate of themselves to account for the wiping out of the fifty thousand majority which Lincoln had received in New York in 1860 and the substitution for it of the decisive majority by which Seymour was elected. The view of the situation during the campaign which was urged by William Cullen Bryant upon Lincoln presents what is generally agreed to be the major cause of this great reversal. “The election of Seymour as Governor of the State of New York would be a public calamity, but it may happen if the army is kept idle. A victory or two would almost annihilate his party, and carry in General Wadsworth triumphantly.”<sup>4</sup> In default of any such victory, the wave of reaction which swept New York carried also the States of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin into the Democratic column. “The defeat of the administration party in these important States,” says Mr. Rhodes, “which was occasioned by its former friends staying away from the polls, was a symptom of weariness of the war, a protest against the waste of so much life and money with so little result accomplished.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Random Recollections, p. 216.

<sup>2</sup> Letter in the *New York Tribune*, November 4, 1862.

<sup>3</sup> Pp. 360, 361.

<sup>4</sup> Godwin's Life of Bryant, II, 176.

<sup>5</sup> History of the U. S., IV, 164. “The country were tired of inaction,” wrote Edwards Pierrepont to Wadsworth on November 5, “disgusted with the delay, and determined that the President should hear and heed a voice which had not been regarded for a long time. The very things which have made you impatient with the President, and with imbecile, timid generals, have made the people impatient with the same President and determined that he

If any shade of personal chagrin tinged the defeat for Wadsworth, it quickly cleared away. The pressure put upon him not only to trim his anti-slavery opinions to the times but also to make a heavy contribution of money for electioneering purposes was, he realized, but a slight strain for his powers of resistance compared to what he would be subjected to if he became governor. "After the election had been decided," writes his aide, Colonel Meneely, "General Wadsworth came to my office door, stood erect, and, holding his hand on his breast, said, 'Here is one person who thinks just as much of General Wadsworth *after* the election as he did *before*.' He had not sold himself, and he felt that, although defeated for office, he was a man."

The political campaign over, Stanton was willing to release Wadsworth from his duties at Washington and to accede to the desire which he had some time since expressed for active service with the Army of the Potomac. Although at the moment no place could be found for him there, Stanton on November 19 granted him a brief leave of absence from his duties as military governor. When, after a visit to his family in New York, he returned to Washington on December 7, his fate was still undecided. "I do not know what I am to do," he wrote to his son James, "whether remain here or go into the field." But Burnside, who had replaced McClellan, had already begun his campaign, and within the week the battle of Fredericksburg was fought and lost. In the train of that disaster came the opportunity for which Wadsworth had been waiting.

should know it. I write this rather to say that you may be sure that no want of personal popularity or personal admiration for your course has prevented your election."

The discussion of this campaign in Brummer's Political History of New York State during the Period of the Civil War, pp. 201-254, is admirable in every respect, and I am greatly indebted to it.

## CHAPTER VI

### IN WINTER QUARTERS. FITZHUGH'S CROSSING. CHANCELLORSVILLE. THE MARCH TO GETTYSBURG

ON the night of December 13 news reached the War Department of the desperate battle which Burnside had been waging that day. The losses had been heavy, and several general officers were known to have been killed. Wadsworth was given orders to report at once to Burnside, and leaving Washington before daylight made his way with all speed to the front. When he reached Fredericksburg he found himself in the midst of an army demoralized and almost prostrated by the repulse which it had just suffered at Lee's hands. It still lay where it had stopped fighting on the south side of the Rappahannock, its only occupation the depressing labors that call for performance after a battle-field has taken its toll of dead and wounded. What revealed itself to the eye received its complement in the stories told by every one with whom Wadsworth spoke, both at Burnside's headquarters, whither he went to report, and at the headquarters of Reynolds, on the extreme left, where he found his son Craig, who had done gallant service as one of Reynolds's aides. The much-enduring Army of the Potomac, in changing McClellan for Burnside as commander, had only fared worse, and the useless sacrifice which he had called upon it to make in the attack on Marye's Heights had wiped out altogether its confidence in its new commander.

Since at the moment there was no need of Wadsworth's services—for the promotions and readjustments

that follow a battle had not yet made a place for him—he returned to Washington to give his testimony before the McDowell court of inquiry.<sup>1</sup> In a few days he was back with the army again, and on December 22 was published his assignment to command the First Division of the First Corps.<sup>2</sup> His aides-de-camp were Major Clinton H. Meneely and Captain T. E. Ellsworth.

The officers and men with whom Wadsworth was to share the service of the next six and a half months—a period which included the battles of Chancellorsville and Gettysburg and the long march from one field to the other—require description here, for his life now became a part of theirs. The officer whom he succeeded was Brigadier-General Doubleday, who, as captain in the regular army, had at Sumter fired the first gun that replied to the Confederates. A capable commander, cool and brave in battle, he was not in good favor with all his brother officers, partly because of his anti-slavery sympathies, partly for the length to which he carried his habit of outspoken criticism. He presently received the command of the Third Division of the First Corps, taking the place of Meade, promoted to the command of the Fifth Corps. The Second Division was led by Brigadier-General John C. Robinson, a brave and reliable soldier.

The corps commander, Major-General John Fulton Reynolds, was one whose qualities both as a man and a soldier were then and are still spoken of in terms of praise that carry with them no phrases of depreciation or disparagement. Fortunate as his career had already been, with its brilliant record on hard-fought fields, the future at the time seemed still brighter. Rated among the “most distinguished and best-beloved officers” of the Army of the Potomac, he was also, in Swinton’s words, “one whom, by the steady growth of the highest

<sup>1</sup> His testimony is found in W. R., XII, pt. 1, pp. 112-115.

<sup>2</sup> W. R., XXV., 876.

military qualities, the general voice of the whole army had marked out for the largest fame."<sup>1</sup> Though Reynolds was thirteen years younger than Wadsworth, there was much in their natures, besides their readiness to fight, which drew them together, and to an unusual degree Wadsworth shared his commander's confidence and regard.

With the members of his staff Wadsworth's intimacy was much more than that of mere forced fellowship. They were young men of the same age as his son Craig, or even younger, and to them, as to his own sons, he knew how to be both father and companion. The warmth and tenderness with which such of them as still survive cherish the memory of those days bears witness to the truth that nothing so quickly and yet so permanently impresses youth as the example of a noble nature thus lived with from day to day. In a world the moral tone of which was constantly threatened by intrigue, jealousy, and all the diversions that crowd into idle hours, these youths had the ever-present inspiration of a man who never thought of himself, because his mind was filled with the thought of duty, and whose sole purpose in the performance of duty was "to alway spend and never spare."

The friendly feeling for Wadsworth which was a matter of course on the part of officers and men in the various regiments established itself the more quickly since one of the four brigades in the division was that which he had commanded the winter before at Upton's Hill. His welcome from them was probably not so turbulent and overpowering as that which the men had given him on the Sunday in the preceding April when he had ridden out from Washington to visit them, but it nevertheless bespoke regard and confidence. The regiments composing the brigade, however, were soon transferred to the provost-marshal general's command and their places

<sup>1</sup> Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac, p. 330.

taken by four New Jersey regiments and one Pennsylvania regiment—all nine months' men whose term of service was to end in June. In still another brigade, where three of the four regiments were composed of two years' men from New York, the worth of his troops was weakened by the fact that the day of their muster-out was but a few months away.

The other two brigades of Wadsworth's division were organizations which any soldier would be proud to command. They had seen and were destined to see as hard fighting as any soldiers in the Army of the Potomac; their fame has matched their great losses in killed and wounded. They were three years' men who had filled the ranks at the call not of bounties but of patriotism. Six of the eleven regiments in the two brigades, it is worth noting, were from the States of Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin.

One of these brigades, consisting entirely of Western regiments—Nineteenth Indiana, Twenty-fourth Michigan, Second, Sixth, and Seventh Wisconsin—was known throughout the army as the Iron Brigade, a name which it had won from its gallant work in storming the Confederate position at South Mountain. The black slouch hats which its men wore made it easily distinguishable. Among its regimental officers was an unusual number of men of the highest type of volunteer soldier. Three of the colonels were Henry A. Morrow, Lucius Fairchild, and E. S. Bragg; the lieutenant-colonel of the Sixth Wisconsin, who still lacked a few days of being twenty-five when he commanded the regiment at Gettysburg, was Rufus A. Dawes. His Service with the Sixth Wisconsin Volunteers, composed largely of letters written to "family, friends, and M. B. G. (my best girl)," is distinguished among books of its class for the completeness of the picture which it gives of the life of a soldier and his regiment and of their relation to the world within and without the army. The brigade commander was



MAJOR-GENERAL JOHN F. REYNOLDS.



BRIGADIER-GENERAL LYSANDER  
CUTLER.





Solomon Meredith, a Hoosier politician. His visits to Washington took him to the White House and obtained promotion for him as the only Quaker general in the army.<sup>1</sup>

The other brigade consisted of the Seventh Indiana, the Seventy-sixth and the Ninety-fifth New York, and the Fifty-sixth Pennsylvania, to which during the spring were added the One Hundred and Forty-seventh New York, a new regiment, and the Eighty-fourth New York, commonly known by its militia designation of Fourteenth Brooklyn. Here, too, were devoted officers and brave men; but the figure that most deserves notice is that of the brigade commander, Lysander Cutler. Fully as old as Wadsworth, with hair and beard nearly white, spare of frame and limping from a wound received at Gainesville, severe in aspect, yet with a kindly look in his keen eyes, quick and nervous, he was a conscientious officer and an indomitable fighter.

Another noteworthy figure was Lieutenant James Stewart, a broad-shouldered Scotchman, commanding the battery of regulars (Battery B, Fourth U. S. Artillery) attached to the division. He had entered the battery as a private ten years before the war began and by reason of this long service understood how to produce effective discipline by the right attitude of comradeship. His men, mostly detached volunteers from the two infantry brigades, responded heartily to such training as his, and the battery won a high name for its wonderful fighting qualities.<sup>2</sup>

The position to which the First Corps was assigned for the winter was on the extreme left of the army, at Belle Plain, on Potomac Creek, a short distance above the place where it empties into the Potomac. A few

<sup>1</sup> After the war Morrow became colonel of the 21st Regiment, U. S. Infantry; Fairchild was Governor of Wisconsin and minister to Spain; Bragg served three terms in Congress, was minister to Mexico, and consul-general at Havana and Hong-Kong; Dawes served in Congress.

<sup>2</sup> In *The Cannoneer*, by A. L. Buell, is told the story of this battery, with much interesting detail as to the personality of its commander.

miles up the river was Aquia Creek, the landing-place at which the supplies for the army were transferred from boats to the military railroad running to Falmouth. At Belle Plain, too, a desolate region with not a house in sight, were supply depots, but here the transportation was wholly by wagons. Back from the landing lay a range of hills, their sides covered with a growth of scrub oak and pine and cut by deep ravines, up which, on hastily constructed roads, struggled the long trains. The Virginia mud, the object of much eloquently descriptive language both then and since, exercised upon the heavy loads all its powers of suction, and frequently a wagon was overturned. Characteristically, one of Wadsworth's first labors was to improve the condition of these thoroughfares—if the term be not altogether a misnomer—for he had no mind that any portion of the army dependent on supplies from Belle Plain should suffer delay or deprivation. With logs cut from the trees on the hill-sides he "corduroyed," the roads, employing himself so unremittingly in the work that he presently came to be known as "Old Corduroy." When, in spite of his care, it was found that "the sharp-hoofed mules would go down in the mud and mire," Wadsworth obtained a supply of oxen, keeping them near his head-quarters. "It was a rare treat to our men," writes Dawes, "to see the old general take a gad and 'whisper to the calves.' He took great interest in the oxen, and was often seen at the landing giving instructions in driving them."<sup>1</sup> The wonder here expressed conveys not only the astonishment of the soldiers at, so to say, scratching a brigadier and finding a farmer, but also their sense of the contrast between Wadsworth and numerous other officers at a period when, according to the latest historian of the campaign of Chancellorsville, "many regimental commanders took little interest in the welfare of their men."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Service with the 6th Wisconsin, p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> The Campaign of Chancellorsville, by J. Bigelow, Jr., p. 34.

Even after all these labors the roads fell short of the service required of them. This restriction in the transportation of supplies affected first the animals of the army, of which the number was unusually large, for at this time Hooker, who had succeeded Burnside in command, was making his unfortunate experiment of substituting pack-mules for wagons. To supply the deficiency in forage, Wadsworth, reviving his practice at Upton's Hill, sent out twice in February and twice in March expeditions to the Northern Neck, as the region to the south lying between the Potomac and the Rappahannock Rivers is called. A similar expedition of cavalry, in which Craig participated, is referred to in the following letter written by Wadsworth on March 9 to his sixteen-year-old son James. Incidentally, the letter shows the writer's rugged health and his intention that his youngest son should join him in the army:

. . . I rode day before yesterday forty odd miles and yesterday sixteen. Craig has just returned from an expedition down the Neck. . . . He went down to Coan River in a boat with 80 cavalry and returned by land—80 miles the way he came. He destroyed several boats the Rebels were using to take supplies over the Rappahannock, took several prisoners engaged in this business, some signal officers, and a considerable amount of army supplies.<sup>1</sup> I sent two infantry parties in the same direction, which were quite successful.

It is my present intention to have you with me early next fall in the army. I am afraid to have you come into this country in the summer—at your age you

<sup>1</sup> Craig Wadsworth's report of the expedition in which he took part is given in 39 W. R., p. 14. On one of these expeditions, or some similar one, Craig, accompanied by a few soldiers, had entered a mill in search of flour. While they were in the loft a small group of Confederate horsemen rode up, hitched their horses, and came into the mill on a similar errand. The Yankees made a hasty exit by sliding down the pulley-rope that hung in front of the loft door, and, as their own horses had been tied on the other side of the mill, rode off on the horses of the rebels. In one of the saddlebags Craig found a letter which had been written to him by one of his sisters and which had suffered capture, with other letters, at the hands of some enterprising Confederate cavalryman.

would be almost sure to have the fever. If I were in a healthy region I would take you as soon as the summer vacation commenced. . . .

As the winter wore away the effects of Hooker's labors of organization began to appear. The equipment of the army was improved in every way possible, and if the pack-mules had not yet shown how bad their worst could be in the way of straying and rolling, at least they were faster than wagons; the absentees had returned to increase the ranks of their regiments—though not indeed to fill them—and all were eager to enter upon the campaign which must begin as soon as the roads became less miry. Across the Rappahannock lay the enemy. His front at Fredericksburg was impregnable; the question was: would Hooker move up or down the river to assail him on the flank?

The arrival of the circular of April 13 from headquarters was the first sign that operations were about to begin. The scale of the movement proposed might be guessed from the fact that each soldier was required to carry in knapsack and haversack field rations for eight days. Heretofore three days' rations had been his usual load, though at times he had carried five. As Wadsworth read this order, his question was not as to the destination of his men, but whether, with this extraordinary burden, in addition to clothing, blanket, canteen, ammunition, and musket, they could possibly compass a march of any length. On this point he would not be satisfied till he had made the experiment on his own person. The historian of the Seventy-sixth New York regiment tells the story of his test as follows:

"Orderly!" said the general, "pack a knapsack, canteen, haversack, and cartridge-box, and roll the tent and overcoat and place them upon the knapsack, according to orders, and put the whole rig on me and hand me a gun. I am going to see if this order can be obeyed by

the men"; and for nearly an hour the general paced his tent carrying the load of a soldier. At the end of that time, perspiring at every pore, he commenced unloading, declaring as he did so: "No man can carry such a load and live; it is preposterous!" He was obliged to promulgate the order, but to the general's credit be it said, no inspector came around to see that the order was obeyed.<sup>1</sup>

Heavy rains prevented the beginning of the movement; yet Hooker's readiness to march at the first opportunity was plain from an order dated April 20 which called for a "spirited regiment" from the First Corps to go down the river some twenty miles and then to cross and capture a small body of Confederates said to be stationed at Port Royal. The object of this demonstration, for which the Twenty-fourth Michigan and the Fourteenth Brooklyn were designated, was to induce Lee to believe that Hooker's main attack was to be made from that quarter. Already fires had been built at night within view of the same place by troops from Doubleday's division, which had gone thither for that purpose. After a day's marching in continuous rain, over roads almost impassable, Wadsworth's regiments returned. They had destroyed a wagon train and captured a few prisoners;<sup>2</sup> whether or not they had deceived Lee is an open question.

At last the rain was over and gone, and under the influence of a warm sun and a brisk wind the roads began to dry rapidly. Expectation was at high pitch. On Mon-

<sup>1</sup> History of the 76th Regiment N. Y. Vols., p. 255. The total weight carried by each soldier as estimated by the chief quartermaster of the army was forty-five pounds (40 W. R., p. 545); as estimated by the quartermaster of the First Corps, forty pounds, exclusive of musket, which was nine pounds (40 W. R., p. 547). Swinton calls it sixty pounds (Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac, p. 273). Wadsworth's brigade of nine months' New Jersey men proved unequal to the burden, throwing away about half their knapsacks and also a considerable number of overcoats, haversacks, and canteens (40 W. R., p. 547). In making his report of the campaign (39 W. R., p. 261), Wadsworth entered a protest at the excessive weight of the load.

<sup>2</sup> 39 W. R., 137.

day, April 27, four of the army corps began the grand turning movement up the river; on Tuesday morning the First Corps made ready for its march, which was to bring it to the banks of the Rappahannock, opposite a spot a few miles below Fredericksburg.

But at the very moment of starting a smouldering difficulty in a regiment of one of Wadsworth's brigades burst into flame as open mutiny. There were at the time in the Army of the Potomac sixteen thousand four hundred and eighty men<sup>1</sup> who had enlisted at the beginning of the war for two years. As has been said, their term of service was about to expire, but whereas the men contended that the date of its expiration should be determined by that of their acceptance by their respective States, the adjutant-general's office at Washington had ruled that the period of two years must count from the time of their muster in as United States volunteers. It so happened that the day had passed on which, according to the soldiers' reckoning, their service was over, while the day which the Federal government recognized lay beyond the gulf of battle. The patriotism of a few companies of one of the New York regiments in Wadsworth's First Brigade proved unequal to this strain; on being given the order to march they refused to move.

When the news that the apprehended trouble had come to a head was brought to Wadsworth, he sent on his command, except the Iron Brigade, after the other divisions of the First Corps. As soon as they were well out of sight he ordered the Iron Brigade to march to the camp of the mutinous companies and, halting in front of it, to load and come to "ready." "The forlorn little band," so the incident is recalled by Earl M. Rogers, then in command of Company I, Sixth Wisconsin,<sup>2</sup> "that had done good work, and left many on the field of battle,

<sup>1</sup> 40 W. R., p. 243. There were also 6,421 nine months' men.

<sup>2</sup> MS. narrative.



then saw their error. General Wadsworth then rode in front of them, uncovering his head, and in a loud voice said, 'Men of New York, of good deeds, I give you the alternative. New York is ashamed of your conduct; I am astonished. Take two steps to the front as your willingness to obey the command to march; unless you do, by the Almighty, I will bury you here.' He gave the command and every man marched, ashamed of himself. The Iron Brigade recovered arms, the band played 'Johnny Comes Marching Home,' and the little affair was over, and the army, other than Cutler's brigade,<sup>1</sup> no wiser. When Wadsworth rode past, the boys of Cutler's brigade cheered him vociferously, and carried their hats on their bayonets in further honor for his vigorous putting down of the little rebellion." Within twenty-four hours he was to win their admiration in an even higher degree.

The movement which Wadsworth's division had begun was a part of the comprehensive and masterly strategy which preceded the battle of Chancellorsville and for which Hooker's severest critics have not stinted their praise. To deceive Lee as to his real intention to cross the Rappahannock by its upper fords, Hooker planned to have pontoon bridges thrown across the river at two points below Fredericksburg, and over these bridges troops were to be sent to make a demonstration against Lee's right flank. For this purpose three corps under the command of Major-General Sedgwick were designated. It was apparently Hooker's expectation that Lee, forced to abandon Fredericksburg, would retreat toward Richmond, whereupon both wings of the Union army were to start in pursuit. If, however, the Confederate commander were so rash as to fight, he would be hopelessly crushed between them. In either case success was assured, and Herman Haupt was in waiting on the north bank of the Rappahannock with

<sup>1</sup> The Iron Brigade had formerly been commanded by Cutler.

all the materials for rebuilding the railroad toward Richmond in the rear of the advancing army.

To make the crossing at Pollock's Mill Creek, or Fitzhugh's Crossing, about three miles below Fredericksburg, where the lower pair of bridges was to be laid, Wadsworth's division was chosen. The peril of the enterprise came from the rifle-pits with which the high south bank of the stream was lined and from which Confederate sharpshooters and infantry could pour destructive fire on whoever came down to the opposite margin of the river, which was here less than two hundred yards wide. In the preceding December, before the battle of Fredericksburg, the efforts of the engineer brigade to bridge the stream had been frustrated and matters had remained at a stand-still until the colonel of the Seventh Michigan offered his regiment to cross the river in the pontoon boats, make a charge up the bank, and drive the enemy out of his defences. The operation so brilliantly successful then was to be attempted now with this difference, that the attacking party was to be thrown over just before dawn in the hope of taking the enemy by surprise.

The pontoon train which had been put under Wadsworth's charge he found assembled at a point some distance back from the river. In order that there might be no rumble of heavy wagons or uplifted voices of mules and darkies to alarm the enemy, he was directed to assign seventy-two men to carry each of the forty-four pontoons (the weight of each being one thousand five hundred pounds), and to detail crossing squads of sixty men which were to march each beside its boat. By this arrangement the boats would receive their several loads as soon as they were put into the water.

To move without noise some three thousand one hundred men, with their heavy burdens, over uneven roads for a distance of three-quarters of a mile in the darkness of a drizzly night was a feat the successful

performance of which might well rival the silent up-building of Solomon's temple. Nevertheless, according to orders the first five pontoons were lifted from the wagons, raised breast high on timbers, and started toward the river. "For some time," writes an officer in one of the regiments assigned to the work, "the march was continued in silence, as had been intended from the first, but as the long minutes wore on, with no signs of shore apparent, the burden of carriage became too great for the soldiers' strength. Obligated by the compulsion of fatigue to stop sometimes for rest, the intervals of marching forward became shorter, and voices had to be used to prevent irregularity in lowering the boats as well as to halt those in the rear of a group too tired to proceed farther. . . . Finally the officers had to take hold with the men. . . . It seemed as though the river was withdrawing from us and could never be reached. The damp meadows over which we were groping our way became as mortar under our feet. Man after man dropped to the ground unable to sustain the work. Morning was coming on apace, and still no sign of the Rappahannock. The babbling of many tongues swelled up from the ranks, and from the distant hills came the sound of cock-crowing, the precursor of breaking day."<sup>1</sup>

As Wadsworth followed the struggles of his men he became convinced that the chance for a surprise had already been lost and that if this method were continued it would be long after daybreak before the forty-four pontoons could be assembled at the shore. Taking things into his own hands, he ordered the five pontoons to be reloaded on the trucks and the entire train to proceed to the river. At dawn twenty of the boats were in the water, and in the morning mist that hung over the river there was reason for hope that the remainder could be

<sup>1</sup> Among the Pontoons at Fitzhugh's Crossing, by Theron W. Haight. War Papers Read before the Commandery of the State of Wisconsin, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the U. S., I, 419, 420.

brought down in safety. Suddenly a volley of musketry from the opposite bank crashed through the fog. "A panic ensued in the pontoon train," writes Dawes. "There was a grand skedaddle of mules with lumbering pontoon boats, negroes, and extra-duty men. We cleared the track and let them go by us in their frantic and ludicrous flight. We had completely failed to surprise the enemy."<sup>1</sup>

For some hours things were at a deadlock. Neither Wadsworth nor Reynolds was willing to send men huddled together in boats against a force of unknown magnitude hidden behind a screen of fog. Artillery was brought into position, infantry posted in sheltered places on the edge of the bank above the shore; the men got breakfast.

This period of waiting was broken in upon by the arrival of the commander of the engineer brigade, Brigadier-General H. W. Benham. Though the other bridges at Franklin's Crossing, a mile and a half up the river, had at last been laid, the misunderstandings and delays attending the work had wrought his naturally excitable temper to its highest pitch. Here at Fitzhugh's Crossing, when he learned how Wadsworth had seen fit to countermand his orders and when he saw the boats lying empty on the shore with no troops at hand, he would doubtless have ordered Wadsworth under arrest as he had already ordered the brigade commander at Franklin's Crossing. Fortunately—that is, for Benham—signs that the fog was beginning to lift speedily engaged the thoughts of all those responsible in planning for immediate action.

When at about half-past eight the curtain was withdrawn from before the Confederate side of the river, the rifle-pit from which the firing had come was seen to be directly opposite the point where the boats lay. Skirmishers were stretched along the bluff up and down

<sup>1</sup> Service with the 6th Wisconsin, p. 135.

stream, and the total number of the enemy appeared to be four or five hundred.<sup>1</sup> The steep bank was obstructed not only with underbrush but with an abatis of trees placed with their tops extending down the slope. Reynolds ordered Wadsworth to force the crossing at once, and Wadsworth communicated the order to the two regiments of the Iron Brigade chosen for the undertaking—the Sixth Wisconsin and the Twenty-fourth Michigan. While their colonels were giving the men explicit instructions, the artillery on the higher ground behind them began a “slow, deliberate, and well-sustained fire of great accuracy.”<sup>2</sup> It checked and dispersed a regiment coming to reinforce the Confederates on the river bank and ultimately compelled the latter to take refuge by lying prostrate behind their defences.

Encouraging though the support of the batteries was, the Michigan and Wisconsin men had a daunting task before them. They had watched the shooting down of their comrades who were unloading the boats, had seen the pell-mell of confusion when the teams were stampeded, and now, as they fixed bayonets and threw their belongings into company piles, they called out: “Here’s for Libby,”<sup>3</sup> “Farewell, mother,” “Good-by, my lover, good-by,” and other grim vocatives of the soldier’s vocabulary. “As the troops were going to the river at the double quick,” writes General Kress, “Generals Reynolds and Wadsworth, with staff officers and orderlies, rode down behind the lines. I joined them, and as we were under a heavy fire of artillery and small-arms, I looked around to see how it affected my friends. The most unconcerned of the whole party appeared to be the two generals, who energetically smoked their cigars and maintained a calm exterior.”<sup>4</sup>

“By the right of companies, to the front, double quick, march!” At Colonel Bragg’s command the Sixth

<sup>1</sup> 39 W. R., p. 258.

<sup>3</sup> Libby Prison.

<sup>2</sup> General Hunt’s report, 39 W. R., p. 247.

<sup>4</sup> Unidentified newspaper article.

Wisconsin dashed to the boats, filled them, and pushed out into the stream. Craig Wadsworth was in one of the first. Poles and even the butts of muskets helped the oars in speeding them over the short space of water. The Twenty-fourth Michigan, embarking farther down, was behind them only a moment, if at all. As soon as they were off, some companies of the Second Wisconsin, which had been moved down to the shore to assist in covering the crossing of the first regiments, scrambled into the remaining boats. "When the last boat was launched and filled by the infantry," writes one of the men who crossed in it, "and the engineers, who acted as oarsmen, were about to move off, the general [Wadsworth] cried out, 'Hold on,' stepped to his horse, threw the lines over his head, and sprang into the stern of the boat, holding the lines in his hand. The horse was decidedly opposed to taking a bath so early in the morning, but the general said to me, 'Push him in, lieutenant,' and, some of my company standing near by, I said to them, 'Push him in, boys,' and with a strong push, a long push, and a push-all-together, the horse was forced into the stream. The infantrymen were ordered before they went 'aboard' to lie down and were occupying this position, while General Wadsworth stood erect in the stern of the boat, the horse swimming behind. . . . It is not strange that I should make the remark at the time to some of the men standing near me: 'General Wadsworth will never see the end of this war—he is too brave a man—he'll be killed before it closes.'"<sup>1</sup>

At first a sharp fire assailed the fleet, but it dwindled as the boats drew near the shore; the two leading regiments, landing one below and one above the rifle-pit, rushed up the bank, went at the works with a cheer, and over them in triumph. As Wadsworth's boat touched the shore, the soldiers, seizing bridle, saddle, and stirrups, dragged the horse to land; animal and rider were

<sup>1</sup> Captain John T. Davidson, in the *Elmira Telegram*, August 24, 1890.



up the bank in an instant. Reaching the level of the plain, Wadsworth with exultation beheld it occupied by none except retreating enemy, and his own men in full possession of the rifle-pit. They had captured nearly a hundred prisoners. He rode his dripping horse up to the commander of the Sixth Wisconsin, calling out: "Colonel Bragg, I thank you and your regiment for this gallant charge in pontoons."<sup>1</sup> The whole affair had taken barely ten minutes.

Another trip of the boats sufficed to bring over the other regiments of the Iron Brigade, and then nothing prevented the rapid construction of the bridges. They were completed by noon, and Wadsworth's entire division of eight thousand men was presently in position on the south side of the river, his lines extending down to Massaponax Creek and up to connect with the division (Brooks's) of the Sixth Corps that had come over by the bridges at Franklin's Crossing. The Confederates, meanwhile, except for an occasional shell, made no further opposition, and all day the two armies remained watching each other, their picket lines not more than fifty yards apart.

During these hours there was opportunity to bury the men killed in the morning's engagement at the rifle-pit—a few Confederates, of Union soldiers a considerably larger number. "One of our sergeants," writes Colonel Mency in this connection, "came to the general with a letter which he had taken from the body of a Georgia soldier. This letter was directed to the soldier's wife and contained a ten-dollar bill of Northern money. The letter said: 'My dear Wife,—I am going into battle very soon. I send all of the money that I have for you and the children. God knows that I wish I had more.' Here the letter stopped in a way showing that the writer intended adding to it. The general took the letter, turned his horse as if to hide his action,

<sup>1</sup> MS. narrative of Earl M. Rogers.



placed two additional ten-dollar bills in the letter, and sealed it. Then he said: 'Poor woman. She has done no harm and will feel badly enough.' The letter was handed to our provost-marshal with instructions to see that it was sent across the line by the first flag of truce." It is not always the inhumanities of war that stir us most profoundly.

That night Wadsworth's men lay on their arms. On Thursday morning, April 30, in expectation of a forward movement on the part of the Confederates, they fell to work perfecting their intrenchments, using freely for this purpose farming implements and timber from barns. When, early in the afternoon, the enemy was seen to be forming in column of attack and threatening the bridge-heads, Wadsworth's line was further strengthened by two batteries sent over in haste by Reynolds. Nothing came of the threatened movement, however, and the Confederates confined their activity to shelling, damaging the bridges somewhat and annoying Robinson's division across the river. With the coming of dark Wadsworth ordered work on the intrenchments to be resumed; as the men toiled through the night they were surprised to find themselves visited by him and were cheered with the assurance of his unsleeping care. By morning breastworks firm enough to resist solid shot and shell protected the brigades, and Wadsworth was justified in sending word to General Butterfield, Hooker's chief of staff at Falmouth, that his troops were in good spirits and his position a strong one.<sup>1</sup>

For the success of Hooker's movement it was highly important that he should know whether Lee, suspecting his design, had begun to transfer troops from Fredericksburg to front him at Chancellorsville and whether Longstreet, who, with two divisions of his corps, had been south of the James, was returning to take part in the battle. Yet at the critical moment the means that

<sup>1</sup> 40 W. R., p. 333.

should have been available for this purpose proved of little service. In this fact lies the explanation of the disappointing inactivity of the left wing of Hooker's army at the beginning of the battle. In the first place, being without cavalry, Sedgwick could make no attempt at finding out whether or not the movement of trains on the railroad from Richmond signified the arrival of Longstreet.<sup>1</sup> In the second place, the river fog, as thick on the morning of Friday, May 1, as it had been two days before when Wadsworth had crossed, rendered of no use the balloons and signal stations upon which Hooker depended in lieu of cavalry. Finally, Sedgwick realized that he was in danger of being added to the list of generals on whom Stonewall Jackson had practised successfully his arts of mystification. In the early hours of this Friday morning a deserter had appeared at Wadsworth's picket line. When brought in and questioned he gave information that Jackson's whole corps was still opposite Franklin's Crossing and that Longstreet, with two divisions of his corps, was on the way to rejoin Lee. Wadsworth hurried the man to Reynolds, who hurried him to Butterfield, who at 5.30 A. M. sent the news to Hooker.<sup>2</sup> The first glimpses caught by the signal stations and the balloons at Falmouth through the dispers-

<sup>1</sup> During the forenoon of the day on which Wadsworth and Brooks had crossed, Lee had learned of the other force crossing at Kelly's Ford, far beyond his left. This fact and the continued inactivity of Wadsworth's and Brooks's men made him suspect that the movement below Fredericksburg was merely a feint.—(Lee's report, 39 W. R., p. 796.) On that day, therefore, he did no more than assemble Jackson's divisions opposite Sedgwick and Reynolds. The various movements among these troops watched by Wadsworth on the next day were ordered with deliberate intent to cause the Federals just such bewilderment as appears in the following despatch of Reynolds to Butterfield: "Their position and formation threaten our bridge-heads. This is either bravado, in order to get up troops from Richmond, or they are really in force. They have never shown their troops in this way before. It may be that the artillery is simply horses arranged to look like teams. I cannot see the guns. Wagons have just been seen moving up on the other side of the Massaponax, and a train of passenger cars just gone down the road toward Bowling Green."—(40 W. R., p. 313.)

<sup>2</sup> 40 W. R., pp. 322, 336.

ing mist seemed to reveal no diminution of the force opposite; but considerably later in the morning the balloons reported heavy columns of gray marching in the direction of Chancellorsville. The explanation given by the first deserter, repeated by two other deserters—"one of them quite an intelligent man,"<sup>1</sup> thanks again without doubt to Jackson—kept bewildered alive in the Federal officers. Was it Jackson or Longstreet who was going to Lee's aid?

Thus, all through May 1, Sedgwick, though his thirty-eight thousand men were opposed by only ten thousand Confederates at Fredericksburg, the remainder having joined Lee at Chancellorsville, made no attempt by a vigorous attack to help Hooker in the fight which he was waging twelve miles away. If, according to general expectation, the enemy had retreated, Sedgwick knew his part; but since the Confederate force stood firm, in a strong position, with apparently undiminished numbers, he felt bound to depend upon instructions from his distant commander. Unfortunately, the recently installed field telegraph service on which he relied worked badly, and he and Reynolds, left in the dark, puzzled themselves with hypotheses as to the situation at Fredericksburg and at Chancellorsville. Early in the afternoon, in the hope of getting some light on the state of things opposite them by forcing the enemy to expose his line of battle, Reynolds ordered Wadsworth to make a demonstration, but so advantageous was the Confederate position for concealing troops that Wadsworth could report merely that the enemy got under arms in two lines of battle and seemed in the same strength and position that he had been in when they threatened him the day before.<sup>2</sup> Later the intermittent telegraph brought a message that Hooker had suspended his attack, with directions to Sedgwick to keep a sharp lookout and to

<sup>1</sup> Butterfield's report to Hooker.—(40 W. R., p. 332.)

<sup>2</sup> 40 W. R., p. 341.

attack if he saw a chance of success.<sup>1</sup> Finally, at 5.30 an order for a brisk demonstration came from Hooker, having been delayed six hours in transmission.<sup>2</sup> Again Wadsworth made his preparations to advance, but the time for such a movement had plainly gone by, and presently the order was countermanded.

After three days of a situation in which men of Wadsworth's temper were

“ . . . like greyhounds in the slips  
Straining upon the start,”

it was a relief, on the morning of Saturday, May 2, to receive orders to march with the rest of the First Corps to Chancellorsville, where Hooker, impressed by the vigor of Lee's attack and the stories of Longstreet's arrival, had withdrawn to his intrenchments and was preparing to assume the defensive. In the case of this order, however, the telegraph, as on the day before, had done its worst; instead of being able, according to Hooker's intention, to recross the river under cover of darkness, Wadsworth must now get his men over in full view of the enemy. The operation was all the more difficult because one of the bridges had been removed on Thursday night and because the enemy's batteries had acquired perfect range of the single bridge which remained.

The first regiments of his Third Brigade, which had been lying in the rear close to the river, Wadsworth succeeded in getting over without exciting the enemy's attention, thanks partly to the earthworks that protected Reynolds's New York battery at the bridge-head. But no sooner were the Confederates aware of what was forward than their batteries became active. As the One Hundred and Thirty-seventh Pennsylvania was crossing a shell struck and exploded, shattering and sinking a pontoon, killing and wounding several men, and sending the rest precipitately back to the shelter

<sup>1</sup> 40 W. R., p. 326.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 338, 342.

from which they had just emerged. During the delay caused by the repairing of the bridge General Reynolds came over to Wadsworth and ordered the movement to be abandoned. But the latter, not convinced that it was impracticable, urged his reasons till he obtained permission to continue. The brigade (Cutler's) which held the position farthest up the river he could safely take care of by sending it along under cover of the bank to the bridge at Franklin's Crossing. As for the other brigades, Wadsworth hoped that the vigorous work of the New York battery would soon begin to tell on the Confederate guns.

His confidence was well justified. Though the enemy was playing havoc with the men and horses of the battery, the coolness and nerve of its officers kept its fire steady and sure. The duel, in which some of the artillery on the north bank also took part, lasted an hour and a half; twice the Confederate batteries succeeded in delaying the withdrawal of the infantry over the bridge, but in the end they were silenced. After another half-hour of slow firing Captain Reynolds began to withdraw his battery piece by piece, keeping up the game till the last gun was limbered up.<sup>1</sup> When, a little before ten o'clock, none remained to cross except skirmishers and pickets, Wadsworth, who had superintended the crossing from the south bank, rode over and set his command in motion.<sup>2</sup> The other divisions of the First Corps were already several miles ahead on their way to the field of battle.

This episode of the Chancellorsville campaign—the three days' stay of Wadsworth's men on the south side of the Rappahannock, together with the "charge in pontoons" that began it and the anxious recrossing with which it ended—though rarely recorded in the histories

<sup>1</sup> 39 W. R., p. 275.

<sup>2</sup> 40 W. R., p. 362. Wadsworth's estimate of his loss during this crossing was 20 men killed and wounded. The loss of his division in killed at Fitzhugh's Crossing, April 29 to May 2, was 15; the total loss in killed, wounded, and missing, 154.—(39 W. R., pp. 173, 261.)

because it was not in the direct train of mighty events that constituted the great battle, has always been a vivid memory to those who took part in it. Spite of its dearth of fighting, it had an effect of completeness to which the gallantry of its leader lent, perhaps, a final happy touch. The newspaper correspondents with their ready pens gave his distinctive act an additional glamour by the ambiguous statement that General Wadsworth "swam his horse" across the Rappahannock, thereby thrilling their readers and alarming his family;<sup>1</sup> but for the soldiers who watched him standing erect as he crossed the river what he really did was sufficient to seal their admiration for him as a forward fighter. The day of supreme trial for Wadsworth's division of the First Corps was only two months distant in the future; when that day should find it standing firm against Lee's advance upon Gettysburg it was to mean much that commander and men should know each other to be "one equal temper of heroic hearts."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "I do not think I exposed myself unnecessarily," he wrote to his eldest daughter a week later. "I had a very difficult task assigned me. If the enemy had attacked my troops in any force before I got the bridges laid, they would have cut them to pieces; so my place was with them to organize and direct them."

<sup>2</sup> General Orders,

No. 40.

HDQRS. 1ST DIVISION, 1ST ARMY CORPS,

May 9, 1863.

The general commanding, availing himself of the temporary repose now enjoyed by his command to review the operations of the past few days, deems it proper to express his thanks to Colonel Bragg, Sixth Wisconsin Volunteers, Colonel Morrow, Twenty-fourth Michigan Volunteers, and the gallant men under their command, for the heroic manner in which they crossed the Rappahannock and seized the heights on the opposite shore on the 29th of April; and likewise to Brigadier-General Meredith and the whole of the Fourth Brigade for the promptness with which they followed in this daring enterprise. The skill and courage with which Captain Reynolds' Battery L, First New York Artillery, returned the enemy's fire, the boldness exhibited by the Fourteenth New York State Militia as skirmishers, and the steadiness of the whole command during the advance and retreat, have afforded the general commanding the highest gratification and inspired him with entire confidence in the troops of this division.

By command of Brigadier-General Wadsworth:

JOHN A. KRESS,

Lieutenant-Colonel and Acting Assistant Inspector-General.

—(39 W. R., p. 262.)



The long march of twenty-two miles which the men of the First Corps, loaded down with eight days' rations, had now to make on this hot Saturday in May was taken with a will, for they could not doubt that a full meed of fighting would be theirs. Yet, meanwhile, as was presently to be proved, another column of men, led by Stonewall Jackson, was marching to much better purpose. When, well into the evening, Wadsworth's brigades came to a halt, they were still short of United States Ford, where the other divisions of the corps had crossed to join the army. Leaving them by the roadside for a snatch of rest, their commander pushed ahead to find Reynolds and to get orders for the positions that his troops were to occupy. The ford crossed, he plunged into the depths of the forest known as the Wilderness, a region the mystery of which was intensified on this night of brilliant moonlight by the incessant call of the whippoorwills and by the presence of the two armies encamped within its vast shadows. The rout of Howard's corps had occurred but a few hours earlier, and as Wadsworth made his way along the crowded road he gathered such scraps of information and rumor as one picks up at a time like this—the news of Jackson's sudden onslaught upon the negligently guarded flank, of the final stemming of his advance, of the isolated situation of Sickles's corps. Even as he rode the crash of musketry told of the midnight attack by which Sickles was fighting his way back to the Union lines. Having found Reynolds at last, Wadsworth learned that the other divisions of the First Corps were in position holding the right along Hunting Creek and that he was to occupy a second line behind them. He went back to his division, roused the men from their three hours' rest, conducted the brigades through forest roads to their several stations. It was broad daylight when he finished his work, and the battle of Sunday, May 3, had begun—fighting as fierce as any during the whole war—which ended in Hooker's being driven back from the Chancellor house.



In the midst of that terrific roar of cannon and musketry, Wadsworth and his men, in their exhaustion, lay down and went to sleep.

For all the use that Hooker made of them, however, they might as well have rested in the log huts of the disgarnished camp at Belle Plain. All told there were thirty-seven thousand fresh troops on the edge of the zone of battle eager to be ordered into the fight; but neither on this morning nor on the two following days did the stunned commander of the Army of the Potomac make any effort to use them, not even to aid Sedgwick, fighting his own battle at Salem Church. The story of the army in those baffled days of despair may be given in Wadsworth's own words as he told it in a letter to his eldest daughter:

The next day [Monday] we all lay quiet, strangely enough to all of us, hearing the combat between Sedgwick and the foe, who had turned upon him. It was the universal opinion that we should have attacked. Tuesday we rested quietly, and Tuesday night were ordered to recross. After this order was issued we had a tremendous storm of rain. The river rose from three to four feet in as many hours. The smaller water courses were impassable. My pickets<sup>1</sup> were cut off by Hunting Creek, which became a great river, and my division divided by a small stream which for two hours swam a horse in crossing. The movement was ordered suspended at nine o'clock, and resumed at eleven or twelve o'clock. It was a gloomy, anxious, miserable night, all soaked to the skin and splashing about in mud and water of unknown depth. The enemy did not follow.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The 24th Michigan had been sent off to the extreme right to do picket duty.

<sup>2</sup> The notes jotted down by Dawes in his journal on May 4, 5, and 6 make a valuable supplement to Wadsworth's account:

"*Monday, May 4.*—Hot firing on the picket line in the night. An attack by the enemy expected, and men forbidden to take off their blankets.

"Ordered under arms at ten o'clock this forenoon. Twenty-fourth Michigan has just moved to the right, and our regiment is to support them in case of a fight. At half-past eleven nothing has come of it. Just got per-

"We are all humiliated at our retreat," wrote Wadsworth in his discouragement at the results of a campaign which had opened so brilliantly. "Hooker has lost the confidence of the army by his conduct of this movement." Indeed, it was everywhere recognized that not the army but the commanding-general had been beaten. With the right leader, the fighting stuff in the Army of the Potomac could work wonders. The question was, would it ever come to its own?

As soon as Wadsworth's division had established itself in camp at White Oak Church and Fitzhugh's Plantation, not far from the place where he had "swum his horse" across the Rappahannock, he applied for a brief leave of absence; private affairs, which since the battle of Bull Run he had managed with the left hand, as it

mission to get dinner. Boys are all cooking coffee. Drizzling rain at intervals this afternoon. At 5 P. M. there was a very sharp fight at the same place on our left. At this writing, 6 P. M., there is a heavy cannonading in the direction of Fredericksburg. Ten P. M., heavy volleys of musketry on our left and quite a sharp fusillade on our right. Constant alarms until midnight. . . .

"*Tuesday, May 5.*—Foggy this morning. At this writing, 8 A. M., scattering musketry fire a mile away to our left. This developed into a heavy fire of about twenty minutes' duration. The sun will be very hot to-day. Heavy whiskey rations being dealt out to the men. . . . Whiskey enough was sent here to make the whole regiment dead drunk.

"*Eleven o'clock A. M.*—Orders are: 'Be ready to move at once to the right.' It is said that we are to lead in an attack. It is always so. Guess our time has come. False alarm. Some mistake by one of the nine months' colonels on the right. Lie down again and try to kill time. Very hot. Orders to be under arms at sunset. Very heavy thunder-storm at 5 P. M. Miserable situation. Colonel Bragg and I and Huntington all crouched under one oil-cloth in the driving rain. At dark, rumor has come of a general retreat. Mules are packed and sent to the rear. The rain continues pouring down, and our condition that of unmitigated discomfort. Picket-firing the entire night.

"*Wednesday, May 6.*—About three o'clock this morning the infantry began to move for the rear. Our brigade moved the last of our corps at 3.30 A. M. Mud very deep and a drizzling rain. At 5 A. M. we reached the pontoon bridge at United States Ford. Forty thousand men are not yet over. Our division formed in line of battle to protect the passage of the troops. Crossed at 8 A. M. unmolested. Soaking rain and chilly. One hundred thousand miserable and discouraged men are wading through this terrible mud and rain. We cannot understand it in any other way than as a great disaster."—(6th Wisconsin, pp. 138, 139.)

were, now required his presence at Geneseo. The request was refused on the ground that "impending movements would not allow it." But Hooker soon found that his purpose of continuing operations against the enemy was impossible of immediate execution. Not only were regiments whose terms of service had expired on the point of departure—with no fresh men to take their places—but in consequence there was much work of reorganization and redistribution to be done. Moreover, Lincoln intervened, suggesting for the moment a posture of defence and intimating his knowledge that some of the corps and division commanders had lost confidence in Hooker.<sup>1</sup> Since active operations were thus to be deferred, Wadsworth made a second application for leave and his request was granted.

A week later, however, when, having despatched his business in haste, he returned to camp, he found a change in the aspect of things. All signs indicated a forward movement on Lee's part. He had been reinforced by Longstreet; his cavalry, five brigades, was gathering at Culpeper under Stuart; Richmond newspapers, received through the picket exchange on the banks of the Rappahannock, announced that the Army of Northern Virginia was about to make an important movement. This time waiting and watchfulness was the game of the Army of the Potomac; Lee was to keep them at it for a fortnight longer, before the cavalry fight at Brandy Station on June 9 gave Hooker his clue.

The uneasy state of the army in this season of flying rumors is described by Dawes in a letter to M. B. G. on June 5. "We were sold again. After turning out at midnight and packing our traps, and preparing for a battle which somebody seemed to think impending, our orders were countermanded. So we have rebuilt our canvas cities and settled down again. The fact is, somebody is very much exercised lest the terrible Lee may

<sup>1</sup> 40 W. R., p. 479.

do something dangerous. Three times now of late this army has been turned out of house and home to lie sweltering in the sun, only to have its marching orders countermanded. The boys have long ago learned to take such things philosophically. They tear down and build up cheerfully, with the shrewd observation that 'it is only Johnny Reb fooling the balloon again.'"<sup>1</sup>

During these days the departure of the New Jersey brigade of nine months' men made the final reduction suffered by Wadsworth's division after the battle of Chancellorsville. His eight thousand men had been cut to four thousand, and this loss, taken with similar reductions in other divisions and in the artillery, brought the First Corps down from seventeen thousand to ten thousand men, "present for duty," in round numbers. Wadsworth's division now consisted of only two brigades, the Iron Brigade and Cutler's; but its efficiency could not be higher. It was a force fit for hard marching and hard fighting—iron to the last man.

At length, after more orders and counter-orders, at daybreak on June 12 the First Corps broke camp for good and began that series of marches the end of which was accomplished on July 1, when it met and stayed Heth's division of the Confederates advancing upon Gettysburg in search of shoes. Together with the Third and the Eleventh Corps it constituted the right wing of the Army of the Potomac, with Reynolds in command. His place as corps commander was taken by Doubleday, who, having become a major-general of volunteers, now ranked Wadsworth.

Reynolds's march was toward the line of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, with a view to preventing the cavalry raid across the Rappahannock from Brandy Station which Lee was supposed to be contemplating. There was need of haste, for the Confederates already had a start of nearly a week. From White Oak Church

<sup>1</sup> 6th Wisconsin, p. 147.

to Deep Run by the back roads which Reynolds took to avoid observation is full twenty miles. Having broken camp at dawn, the troops marched till dusk. The day was one of scorching heat and suffocating dust; no clear water was to be found, and sometimes even the puddles were miles apart. During the noon halt Wadsworth had to superintend the execution of a deserter from the Iron Brigade. The case was a flagrant one, but the spectacle did not add to the refreshment of the hour's rest.

The next day, June 13, was cloudy, and the march was only fourteen miles to Bealeton Station on the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. At the end of the day Reynolds received orders to make Manassas Junction and then Centreville by forced marches.<sup>1</sup> Ewell's corps, the advance of Lee's army, was known to be in the Shenandoah Valley, and Hooker was planning to withdraw at once from before Fredericksburg to cover Washington.

In good season, on Sunday, June 14, Wadsworth's men, with the rest of the First Corps, started on their journey of thirty miles. Again the sun scorched and the dust choked; the men suffered from them as never before. Following the line of the railroad toward Washington, the troops checked off the stages of their progress by the names of the stations, familiarity with which had been gained by sterner means than the study of time-tables. Warrenton Junction marked seven miles from Bealeton—Catlett's, ten. In the afternoon there was less delay from fording brooks and crossing streams imperfectly bridged, and the quickened pace came at a time when the men could least endure it. The command, "Close up, men, close up!" was incessant and relentless. "No man was allowed to fall out of ranks, under any pretext, without a pass from his company commander, approved by the regimental surgeon. Those

<sup>1</sup> 45 W. R., p. 88.

who did were driven in again by the field-officer at the rear of each regiment, or 'gobbled up' by the rear-guard and urged forward forcibly."<sup>1</sup> "For three miles before the halt at Kettle Run, the men became frantic for water, as there was none save now and then in some mud-hole or slimy frog marsh."<sup>2</sup>

The heights of Centreville, which the enemy might at any moment seize, were fourteen miles farther on; a night march was imperative. It was already dark when the men stepped from stone to stone through the waters of Kettle Run; at Broad Run, a larger stream, they had the help of torches and bonfires on the banks and an improvised bridge of rails. From the heat of the day there was relief, but as the hours of the night dragged on sheer sleepiness caused incredible agony. At dawn, having struggled six miles to Manassas Junction, they were ordered to halt with the promise of five hours of rest; "that noise which once heard on a still night is never forgotten, the solid tramp of a heavy column on a hard road, like the dull roar of a distant cataract,"<sup>3</sup> gradually ceased; the exhausted men threw themselves on the damp grass and slept.

The remaining eight miles to Centreville were accomplished during the forenoon of June 15, completing a march of sixty-four miles made in seventy-eight hours. Here the First Corps rested for the remainder of that day and all of the next, while Hooker was concentrating his army,—three corps at Centreville, three at Fairfax, one corps and the cavalry at Manassas Junction. The news reached the troops that Milroy's force at Winchester, in the Shenandoah Valley, had been attacked and a large part of it captured, thus leaving the way clear for Lee to enter Maryland and Pennsylvania. The same newspapers contained Lincoln's proclamation call-

<sup>1</sup> History of the 150th Pa., p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> History of the 24th Michigan, p. 147.

<sup>3</sup> Henderson's Life of Stonewall Jackson, I, 337.



ing for one hundred thousand militia to repel the invading force. Clearly, stirring events were ahead.

On Wednesday, June 17, at 3 A. M., Reynolds put two of his corps in motion toward Leesburg, bringing them still nearer the Blue Ridge and the Potomac. The route prescribed to the First Corps led it over a cross-road through a dense growth of scrub pine which shut out the breeze but not the sun. The heat was intolerable, the dust an enveloping fog. Cases of sun-stroke were frequent, and officers fared little better than men.

In this state of things, any means that Wadsworth could use to lighten the burdens borne by his choking ranks he did not hesitate to employ. He discovered that an ambulance had been filled with the valises of the officers of his own staff, a practice expressly forbidden by Hooker in a circular issued the very day before with intent to reduce the superfluous baggage in his trains.<sup>1</sup> The requirements of this circular Wadsworth now put into instant effect to the extent of ordering all the valises thrown out at once,—the men delighted to say that his own was among them,—but he shut his eyes to the further provision that “ambulances will not be appropriated to any other than their authorized use,” and for the baggage of the officers substituted the knapsacks and muskets of the men.<sup>2</sup> The division papers that formed part of the property thus jettisoned were fortunately rescued by a salvage party sent out the next day; as for the superfluous baggage, the young men of Wadsworth’s staff took the hint and sent it to the rear by less irregular methods than his.

The day’s march of fourteen miles brought the First Corps to Herndon Station on the Loudoun and Hampshire Railroad. The next day no orders came; the men sought shade from the sun and made up sleep. On Friday, June 19, they advanced six miles and encamped

<sup>1</sup> 45 W. R., p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> 6th Wisconsin, p. 153.



beyond Guilford Station, along the banks of Broad Run. Here they lay for five days.

During this interval Hooker was engaged with scant success in importuning Washington for reinforcements and for a free hand. The other task which occupied him—that of finding out how much of Lee's force had crossed the Potomac—proved, in the existing state of alarm, nearly as difficult. In the words of Hooker's chief of staff, "The whole country, generals and all, seem struck with heavy stampede."<sup>1</sup> At last Lee's movements were disclosed: on June 23 two of Ewell's divisions had laid Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, under tribute; on the next day the corps of Longstreet and of Hill had crossed to the north bank of the Potomac.

This grand strategy, however, was little more than camp rumor for Wadsworth's men, refreshing themselves in the oak groves along the pleasant waters of Broad Run. As for their commander, he had turned bridge-builder and was superintending the erection of a structure over Goose Creek, so that if Hooker should have to pursue Lee into Maryland the army might be able to march by the shortest route to Edwards Ferry, where a pontoon bridge was being thrown across the Potomac.

Early on the morning of June 25, as a result of the knowledge that Hooker now possessed, the First Corps was set in motion. Again Reynolds was put in command of three corps that now were to constitute the left wing<sup>2</sup> and ordered to make haste to lay hold of the passes of South Mountain, as the continuation of the Blue Ridge north of the Potomac is called. With these in possession of the Federals, it would be impossible for Lee to burst through from the Cumberland Valley and to threaten Washington and Baltimore.

The seven miles from camp to Edwards Ferry the

<sup>1</sup> 45 W. R., p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> The First, Third, and Eleventh Corps, with a brigade of cavalry and two sections of artillery.

First Corps covered easily, only to find that the single pontoon bridge was still encumbered by the long and slow-moving trains of the Eleventh Corps. Down-stream another bridge was in course of rapid construction; on both banks was the picturesque animation that always accompanies the crossing of a river by an army.

At last the men of the First Corps felt the bridge sway beneath their tread, and as they took their first steps on the soil of Maryland they broke into cheers. It was a relief to be out of the land of the enemy, even though the State which they were now entering to defend was but half-loyal. Not only were there less forests and more farms, but from many a farm-house they might expect substantial sympathy. Stirring, indeed, was the welcome that met them, and as they marched through Poolesville they found themselves strangely moved by the sight of a large group of school-children drawn up to watch them pass.

At this high pitch of feeling they trudged on, for a time taking little note of the rain which had begun to fall. But when, after a day's march of nearly a score of miles, they went into camp near Barnesville, their elation of spirit had long since felt the effect of the invading wet. One regiment found itself turned into a field where the water stood from three to six inches deep between the rows of corn. By happy chance a large stack of straw in a farm-yard close at hand caught Wadsworth's eye. Its purchase by him and its demolition by his men occupied but a few moments, and, as far as the straw would go, his division was made dry and comfortable.<sup>1</sup>

To reach their destination it was necessary for the First Corps to start at daylight on the morning of June

<sup>1</sup> History of the 76th N. Y., p. 229. A night or two later, after another long march in the rain, he bought a large quantity of fence rails that his men might dry their sodden clothes and have hot coffee.—(New York at Gettysburg, III, 1001.)

26. The march of that day was made harder by deep mud, drizzling rain, and the ups and downs and twists of the rough roads running over the Catoctin ridge. When, however, having accomplished eighteen miles, they went into camp near Jefferson, the long green wall of South Mountain blocked the western view.

Since leaving the Rappahannock, Wadsworth's men had come over a hundred miles, and it was not strange that the rugged ground covered by this day's march should have completed the destruction of many a pair of shoes. His action, as he saw not only men but officers trudging along with bleeding feet, was no more impulsive and characteristic than in the case of the valise-filled ambulance or the stack of straw; but as an extreme measure it caught the soldiers' humor more quickly.

We came to a town on the line of march [so he told the story to a newspaper correspondent some eight months later], and I, who was riding at the head of the column, spurred ahead to see if there were not some shoe stores where I could purchase what was needed for the men. All the shops were closed; the first men I saw were two sitting outside of a closed shop.

"Are there any shoe stores in this town?" I asked. They replied, in a gruff way, that they could not tell, there might be and there might not. I told them that I wanted to buy shoes for my troops who were barefooted. They replied they guessed I wouldn't get many.

At that I got angry. Said I: "There are two pairs of shoes, at any rate, which I see on your feet. Take them off instantly!" They were obliged to do it. I went through the town and took the shoes off every man's feet I could see, and thus I raised about two hundred pairs in all. One fine old fellow, a miller, whom I met, I did not deprive of his own pair. I rode up to him and asked if he had any shoes he could spare me, describing the pitiful condition of my men. The old man said: "I don't know if there's any shoes in the house or not, but"—looking down at his feet—"here's a pair you're welcome to, at any rate." I would not let him take

them off, but he gave me some from his house. All the rest I stripped.<sup>1</sup>

On June 27, Lee having kept on his way up the Cumberland Valley, all that was required of the First Corps was an eight-mile march which took them through Middletown and a little distance beyond along the National Pike, which crosses the mountain at Turner's Gap. Less than two miles away, at the summit of the pass, was the battle-field of South Mountain, where ten months before the Iron Brigade had won its name. The officers who now rode up the gentle slope of the famous highway to note the landmarks of that well-fought mountain struggle and to find the scattered graves of their comrades had a sense that battle was again hovering over them; when the two mighty armies at present separated by South Mountain next met, the shock might well be such as war had never yet known.

On the following day, June 28, came the news that Hooker had been relieved, and with a pang of regret the First Corps learned that his successor was not their Reynolds, but Meade. Reynolds, they believed, was the great soldier, clear-sighted, cool, yet full of ardor; a fighter by instinct and a master of his art. "High was his name, high was his might"; high, too, they felt, should be his command.<sup>2</sup> Yet even then the fatal bullet was

<sup>1</sup> Pictorial Book of Anecdotes and Incidents of the Rebellion, p. 458.

<sup>2</sup> "As a matter of fact, General Reynolds was sent for by the President, and, on the second day of June, 1863, discussed with him for a whole evening and late into the night, at the White House, the question of his taking command of the Army of the Potomac. Reynolds, conscious of his ability to command that army, fully recognized the great responsibility of such a trust, and, that he might be untrammelled in his possible future leadership, on that occasion made it a condition of his ever taking command that he should have absolute control of that army and alone direct its movements, upon which point Halleck and Hooker, some three weeks later on, disagreed, with the result that Hooker was superseded by Major-General Meade, who was then allowed to have his own way."—(From H. S. Huidekoper's Address at the Unveiling of the Equestrian Statue of Major-General John F. Reynolds at Gettysburg, July 1, 1899.)

waiting for him in the cartridge-box of one of Heth's sharp-shooters.

From this point the course of events was rapid. Lee's army was known to be over the Pennsylvania boundary. What Meade must do was to follow him north, spreading his corps so that Lee could not slip around his flank, and at the same time holding them so well in hand that they could be concentrated in case Lee made a sudden attack. On the afternoon of this day, June 28, the First Corps was drawn back ten miles to Frederick; the next day, still a part of the left wing, it made a forced march in the rain of twenty-three miles or more to Emmitsburg. This day's journey was like no other, for exaltation blotted out fatigue. Here was no half-loyalty. Each little village that they passed through—Adamsville, Lewistown, Catoctin Furnace, Mechanicstown—roused them with its flags and its cheers; from the farms along the road women issued forth bearing pails of water and of milk, loaves of fresh bread, and cherries in abundance. A mounting wave of enthusiasm swept with them up toward the Pennsylvania boundary, quickening their desire to find and to fight the invader.

On June 30, making a late morning start and leaving behind them the Eleventh Corps, they crossed Mason and Dixon's line, going into camp at Marsh Creek after a march of less than five miles. In the afternoon officers were busily occupied; the troops had to be mustered for pay; quartermaster, commissary, ordnance, and regimental returns were to be made out, for it was the last day of the fiscal year. At Wadsworth's request, Lieutenant-Colonel Kress set out to discover if possible a map in some friendly farm-house, for the unexpected course of the campaign into Pennsylvania had found the Army of the Potomac but meagrely supplied with topographical information. From Buford's division of cavalry, passing by on the road to Gettysburg, Wadsworth and his men learned of the proximity of the enemy.

"We have found the Johnnies," the riders called out; "they are just above and to the left of us, and the woods are full of 'em!"<sup>1</sup> In expectation that the Johnnies might speak for themselves, the divisions of the First Corps were so disposed at nightfall as to guard against surprise from the west. Among officers and men the feeling was strong that they had at last reached the brink of battle. "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came."

<sup>1</sup> The Cannoneer, p. 61.

## CHAPTER VII

### GETTYSBURG

"But who, if he be called upon to face  
Some awful moment to which Heaven has joined  
Great issues, good or bad for human kind,  
Is happy as a Lover; and attired  
With sudden brightness, like a Man inspired."

—WORDSWORTH—*Character of the Happy Warrior.*

DAYLIGHT on July 1 brought no sign of the enemy, and Wadsworth's division, breaking camp, prepared for the march to Gettysburg, which lay some five miles to the north. Having been the leading division on the day before, it was to-day, according to custom, to let the other divisions pass it on the road and to take its position in the rear. As the troops were forming, however, General Reynolds rode up and directed Wadsworth to start his men at once; to follow the routine of march procedure would waste precious time and the First Division must take the head of the column again. On the day before, it seemed, the enemy had shown himself not far from Gettysburg, having come through the South Mountain range by the Cashtown or Chambersburg Road;<sup>1</sup> another force, Ewell's, which had been occupying York and Carlisle and threatening Harrisburg, was probably approaching from the north; and if, as appeared likely, Lee was planning to concentrate his army at Gettysburg, it was highly desirable that support for Buford should be at hand in good season.<sup>2</sup> A

<sup>1</sup> See the general map at the end of the book.

<sup>2</sup> "I do not know under what orders General Reynolds moved that day. He was generally very particular in communicating his orders to his division commanders, but on that occasion he communicated none if he had any."—



glance at the map which Wadsworth had procured and which the two generals sat down by the road-side to examine showed them the roads converging upon the town from all points of the compass and gave plausibility to the conjecture. At any rate, from Buford, energetic and reliable, they could get what information had been brought in during the night, and so they soon remounted and with the members of their staffs pushed on ahead of the infantry to find him in Gettysburg.

When they were within a mile of the town they encountered an aide of Buford's riding in haste to meet them. A considerable force of the enemy's infantry, he reported, was advancing upon Gettysburg from the direction of Cashtown and was driving back the cavalry vedettes. Taking in the full significance of this news, Reynolds and Wadsworth paused a moment to consider whether their troops should go into the town or should take position on the elevated ground to the west where the cavalry were now making their stand. In order that the town might not be endangered by the shelling, Reynolds decided upon the latter course.<sup>1</sup> Leaving Wadsworth to direct the troops to what was to be the

(General Wadsworth's testimony before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, Report of 1865, I, 413.) The orders for July 1 contained in the circular of June 30 required the First Corps to move to Gettysburg with the Eleventh Corps in supporting distance; but Meade was already preparing to withdraw his army to the defensive line of Pipe Creek, and his expectation was that, if the First Corps should encounter the Confederates in superior force at or near Gettysburg, Reynolds would hold the enemy in check and fall slowly back.—(45 W. R., p. 462. See also the despatch to Hancock of 12.30, on p. 461). Reynolds, on the other hand, was guiding his conduct more by the sentence in Meade's letter of June 30: ". . . if they advance against me, I must concentrate at that point where they show the strongest force."—(45 W. R., p. 420). Thus Reynolds, keen to meet the enemy and to attack him before he could concentrate, felt himself free to hurry the First Corps to support Buford at Gettysburg. Meade's circular of July 1 (45 W. R., p. 458), in which the plan for the movement to Pipe Creek was outlined, and his letter to Reynolds of the same date (p. 460), in which is expressed reliance on Reynolds's judgment as to the desirability of concentration at Gettysburg, were probably not received by Reynolds.

<sup>1</sup> Wadsworth's testimony.—(C. W., 1865, I, 413.)

field of battle, he then rode forward to consult with the cavalry commander.<sup>1</sup>

Almost at the same time the triple boom of cannon, the cavalry leader's signal gun, came across the fields, followed by the prolonged crackling sound of musketry. The contest had begun, but it would be an hour yet ere Wadsworth's division could get up. Summoning it to come on in haste, he impatiently watched for its arrival. Out of all the infantry in the great Army of the Potomac, it had been chosen by fate to bear the brunt of the first onset in what could hardly be other than one of the decisive battles of the war. If Lee were victorious, his success would mean foreign recognition of the Confederacy and the eventual triumph of its cause; if defeated, he never again, in all probability, would be able to undertake an offensive campaign against the Federal arms. On the First Division of the First Corps, therefore, in the early hours of the battle, depended great issues, and Wadsworth as he waited gloried in its opportunity.

Meanwhile sounds of the fight were swelling stronger and stronger. Presently aides dashed by on the Emmits-

<sup>1</sup> Lee had designated Cashtown, eight miles west of Gettysburg, as the place of concentration for his army, and on July 1 his head-quarters were to be there.—(See *The Strategy of the Gettysburg Campaign*, by Major-General George B. Davis, Mass. Mil. Hist. Soc. Papers, III, 405-409.) The force approaching Gettysburg on the morning of that day was Heth's division, 7,600 strong, which belonged to A. P. Hill's corps and which, according to the accepted story, was marching thither in the hope of supplying itself with shoes; since, in the absence of his cavalry, Lee was ignorant of the whereabouts of the Army of the Potomac, Heth was supported by Pender's division of 6,200 men. Behind them, coming from the direction of Chambersburg, was the main strength of the Confederate army. Near Heidlersburg, nine miles northeast of Gettysburg, were two of the divisions of Ewell's corps, Rodes's and Early's, with 15,000 men. These, marching toward Cashtown, turned toward Gettysburg on orders from Lee after the engagement had begun.

Of Federal troops within reach there were, besides the 3,100 cavalry at Gettysburg, the First and the Eleventh Corps, with 20,000 men; the Eleventh Corps, however, was, on the morning of July 1, ten miles away at Emmitsburg. Of the two other corps nearest to Gettysburg, the Third and the Twelfth, neither reached the field in time to take part in the battle.

burg road with messages from Reynolds to Doubleday, to Howard, to Sickles; then Reynolds himself appeared, riding across the fields to Codori's farm-house on the high-road, his escort demolishing the fences in order to make a short cut for the troops to the battle-ground; finally, from the other direction, the head of the infantry column came into view. As Wadsworth turned it into the fields, where it crushed the ripening crops into the red earth, non-combatants fell to the rear; the men going into action flung aside knapsacks and were ready for the command to double-quick.

The ground where Wadsworth's division was to fight on the first of the three days' battle at Gettysburg has as its chief characteristic two elevations of land running north and south about seven hundred yards apart, between them a gently curving dip of open fields. The ridge next the town is known as Seminary Hill, from the brick building of the Lutheran Seminary situated on the road which follows the line of the ridge. The road, at that time as now, was pleasantly shaded, and the houses along it belonged to professors in the institution. Two highways cross the ridge, diverging from each other at an angle of about sixty degrees, and the seminary building stands about half-way between them. The northern road is the turnpike leading to Cashtown and to Chambersburg; the southern leads to Fairfield. The western ridge, which is hardly more than a roll of ground lower and smoother than the eastern, was partly covered by some four or five acres of woodland, between which and the pike were the buildings of the McPherson farm. The western side of this ridge slopes down to Willoughby Run. About four hundred feet north of the pike, and nearly paralleling it, ran the road-bed of a railroad, graded, but with no rails or ties laid; a cutting of some depth had been made for it through each of the ridges and between them it was carried over the low ground on an embankment. North of the railroad the

continuation of Seminary Hill was heavily wooded for three-eighths of a mile; beyond was open ground rising steadily for half a mile to an elevation known as Oak Hill, which commands all the region to the south. To the east of this northern portion of Seminary Ridge was a broad, open plain; east of the seminary itself was the compact little town of Gettysburg. (See map facing p. 214.)

The direction given to Wadsworth's troops by Reynolds brought them out into the open space between the ridges and the two diverging roads. The head of the column reached the Cashtown pike not long before ten o'clock, at the moment when Buford's men had been pressed back to the McPherson ridge, where the six guns of a battery of horse artillery were stationed.<sup>1</sup> Reynolds ordered Wadsworth to form the three leading regiments of the leading brigade (Cutler's sixteen hundred men) in line of battle north of the pike; the other two were to advance south of it; between them, at the point where the road crossed the ridge, he stationed Hall's battery, thus relieving the guns in position there.

The work which Cutler's three regiments had to do north of the road admitted of no delay. Even before the line could be completely formed they were fired upon, and Cutler had to send them forward up the little slope without clear knowledge of the enemy's numbers or precise position. At the crest they met the foe; the crash was sudden and terrific. Not only were the Confederates (three regiments of Davis's Mississippi brigade of Heth's division) in greater force (about one thousand nine hundred men), but they overlapped considerably Cutler's right. Unequal as the conditions were, his men fought stubbornly, suffering heavy loss, till an order reached them from Wadsworth to retreat. The two veteran regiments on the right withdrew in some confusion; the third regiment, the One Hundred and

<sup>1</sup> Tidball's battery, commanded by Lieutenant John H. Calef. It was this battery that had opened the battle.

Forty-seventh New York, under fire for the first time, did not receive the order and remained where it was, the men getting what protection they could by lying down. The Confederates were now sweeping on in triumph, partly pursuing Cutler, partly preparing to surround the isolated New York regiment. Hall's battery in the road consequently came in for severe handling from the skirmishers advancing on that flank; finally, in default of orders to retire from his impossible situation, its commander took matters into his own hands. During his withdrawal all the horses of the last gun were shot and he was obliged to leave it behind.

At the beginning of the engagement Wadsworth had taken his stand at the edge of the woods on Seminary Hill, from which point of observation he could watch the operations of both his brigades. As he took note of this succession of misfortunes on the right, he perceived to his horror that the One Hundred and Forty-seventh was still in its advanced position. Evidently his order had not reached it and it was now in danger of being cut off. On the perilous mission of extricating it, if possible, Wadsworth despatched his aide, Captain Ellsworth. Then came the worst news of all, stunning in its suddenness, overwhelming in its consequences. Reynolds was killed, shot by a Confederate sharp-shooter on the edge of the McPherson woods as he was sending the Iron Brigade into action. "The architect of the battle had fallen dead across its portal."

Wadsworth was therefore, as he believed, in command in the absence of Doubleday, and the situation was at the very acme of crisis. He instantly gave orders to Hall to go toward the town and to take a position to cover the retreat of the troops thither. When Hall asked that he might first recover his abandoned gun, Wadsworth ordered him peremptorily to make haste, for no time was to be lost.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hall's report, 43 W. R., p. 359.

Fortunately, from the other end of the field help was already under way to the imperilled right wing. General Doubleday, who, unknown to Wadsworth, had arrived as the nineteen hundred men of the Iron Brigade were going into action, had detained for reserve its rear regiment, the Sixth Wisconsin, and the brigade guard; now, with the sureness and skill of a trained soldier, he sent this body of five hundred men speeding to the place where their impact would prove most telling. Davis's brigade, made aware of the danger, gave over the pursuit of Cutler and faced to meet them. Swiftly blue and gray approached each other, their lines being parallel to the turnpike and the railroad embankment. A carefully aimed volley or two from the men of the Sixth Wisconsin, their muskets resting on the road-side fence rails, checked the onset of the yelling Confederates and sent them rushing for shelter to the railroad cut on their right. In this position the fire of one of the guns from the horse artillery stationed on Seminary Ridge began to tell on them severely.<sup>1</sup> Through the smoke the watchers there could descry other blue troops deploying beyond the Sixth Wisconsin. These, the two regiments stationed by Reynolds on the left of Hall's battery, having first driven off easily the enemy's skirmishers to their left and front, and then fallen back with Hall, were now turning to the rescue of the regiment on their right, and the line thus lengthened charged across the interval of four hundred feet between the turnpike and the railroad. A murderous fire met it from the Confederates sheltered in the cut; "the whole field behind streamed with men who had been shot and who were struggling to the rear or sinking in death upon the ground";<sup>2</sup> again and again the colors fell, but each time they were uplifted and the men closed up well upon them. The Sixth Wisconsin threw forward its

<sup>1</sup> 43 W. R., p. 1031.

<sup>2</sup> 6th Wis., p. 168. "Four hundred and twenty men started in the regiment from the turnpike fence, of whom about two hundred and forty reached the railroad cut."



right across the end of the cut, and as the smoke drifted away on the sultry breeze the entrapped Confederates were seen throwing down their arms. Also, if the figure of Dawes came within the field of Wadsworth's glasses, he was revealed among the Second Mississippi Volunteers holding a clumsy armful of swords collected from its officers.<sup>1</sup>

If ever Wadsworth had reason to glory in the alertness and firmness of his fighters it was at this moment. By the swift and brilliant stroke of these three regiments the knot of troubles on the right was cut clean through, and matters at once began to straighten themselves out. The One Hundred and Forty-seventh New York, which in the space of half an hour had lost in killed and wounded two hundred and seven out of four hundred men engaged,<sup>2</sup> could make its retreat unmolested. As for the enemy's force, it was, except for a small nucleus, resolved into groups of unarmed stragglers.<sup>3</sup>

The cheer of a victory thus snatched from defeat on the right was heightened by the good news from the left. The Iron Brigade, advancing over the crest south of the McPherson woods, had surrounded and captured General Archer and over five hundred men, one-half of his brigade; Craig Wadsworth, as it happened, had advanced with them, and, together with another of Reynolds's aides, had had much to do with the success of the flanking movement. As a further piece of good fort-

<sup>1</sup> "Later in the day," writes Dawes, "we marched through the railroad cut, and about one thousand muskets lay in the bottom of it. Only one regiment surrendered as an organization, and that was the 2d Mississippi Volunteers. The 95th New York took prisoners, as did also the 14th Brooklyn. All the troops in the railroad cut threw down their muskets, and the men either surrendered themselves, or ran out of the other end of the cut."—(6 Wis., p. 173.)

<sup>2</sup> 43 W. R., p. 282. The total of three hundred and eighty given there is undoubtedly too small.

<sup>3</sup> "Davis's brigade was kept on the left of the road that it might collect its stragglers, and from its shattered condition it was not deemed advisable to bring it again into action on that day."—(General Heth's report, 44 W. R., p. 638.)



une, the Confederates, though in force, did not renew the attack,<sup>1</sup> contenting themselves with desultory firing from the batteries of McIntosh's and Pegram's battalions, stationed on the high ground beyond Willoughby Run. To Doubleday this successful repulse of the Confederates, followed by their inaction, seemed to justify a continuance of the fight on the ground on which Reynolds had begun it, and he accordingly sent orders to Wadsworth to dispose his command in the position for which it had originally been designated.<sup>2</sup>

Setting his hand to this work with a will, Wadsworth presently made the discovery that Hall's battery was out of reach, its commander having understood Wadsworth's order to mean that he was to take his guns to Cemetery Hill, south of the town. In his instant need Wadsworth fell upon the horse artillery on Seminary Ridge, whither it had gone to refill its limber chests, and ordered it forward to the McPherson ridge. Its commander, however, John H. Calef, a young second lieutenant just out of West Point, respectfully represented that he was under Buford's orders. At a moment of such stress and excitement Wadsworth was in no mood to give weight to such distinctions; after a rapid passage of words he had his way. Whatever his ire, Calef had to admit that the necessities of the occasion re-

<sup>1</sup> Heth, although he had two fresh brigades, did not renew the battle at that time because, as he says in his report, his orders were merely "to make a forced reconnoissance and determine in what force the enemy were, whether or not he was massing his forces on Gettysburg."—(44 W. R., p. 637.) Having found, at the expense of heavy loss to two of his brigades, that he had encountered not Pennsylvania militia but the Army of the Potomac, he awaited the arrival of Ewell from the northeast.

<sup>2</sup> Doubleday, on reaching the field just as the battle was beginning, had sent to Reynolds for orders. The reply was: "Tell Doubleday I will hold out to this road [the Cashtown Turnpike] and he must hold on to that one [the Fairfield Road]."—(Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, p. 130.) This order, meant merely to cover the emergency of the moment, had the unfortunate effect of directing Doubleday's attention to the left "during the entire day," as he himself admits, and prevented him from realizing as quickly as he should have done the real danger on the right, of which Buford had full knowledge.—(See Buford's despatch to Meade, 43 W. R., p. 924.)

quired a battery in that position, and he sent thither four of his guns. Wadsworth meanwhile dashed off to find the necessary infantry supports. The regiments of Cutler's brigade, none too strong at the beginning of the day, were now pitifully thin; but when eked out with the Sixth Wisconsin they made a respectable though far from adequate force. Such as they were, however, they went forward to the exposed open fields on the ridge north of the McPherson farm.

This done, Wadsworth gave his attention to the Iron Brigade, a portion of which, after its capture of Archer and his men, had pushed on across Willoughby Run. He ordered them back to the shelter of the McPherson woods and disposed them there; then he got skirmishers to go forward to occupy the Harman house on the other side of the run, and here again, as in the case of Calef's battery, it made no difference to him that the men whom he obtained came from another command—the Third Division, namely, one brigade of which was taking position at the left of the Iron Brigade. Next he turned his thoughts to the protection of his right. It is of such occupations as these, crowded into moments flying all too fast, that Dawes was thinking when he wrote: "The activity, efficiency, and, if I may so express it, the ubiquity of General James S. Wadsworth in the battle was remarkable. He was of venerable and commanding appearance, and was absolutely fearless in exposing himself to danger."<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the remaining divisions of the First Corps, with five thousand five hundred men to take into battle, and the artillery that accompanied them were reaching the field. Stone's brigade of the Third Division was posted at the McPherson farm buildings between Wadsworth's two brigades; the other brigade (Biddle's) of the division, as has already been noted, took position on the

<sup>1</sup> Dawes's *With the Sixth Wisconsin at Gettysburg*. *Sketches of War History*, Ohio Commandery of the Loyal Legion, III, 373.

extreme left. Robinson's division, consisting of Paul's and Baxter's brigades, Doubleday stationed in reserve at and near the seminary, where a breastwork of rails was thrown up. Presently, Major-General Howard came upon the scene, having ridden on ahead of the infantry of the Eleventh Corps, and by virtue of his rank took command.

The knowledge of these reinforcements, together with the observation of a movement of the enemy's troops which, through the hazy atmosphere, seemed like retreat, led Wadsworth to believe that opportunity was offered to follow up the first success of the morning. Accordingly, at 12.10 he sent an aide with a message to Doubleday or Howard urging a prompt advance. "I am not sure," he added, "that they are not moving round on our right flank, though I do not see any indication of it."<sup>1</sup>

Any such proposal, however, the rapid development of events soon disposed of as out of the question. On Wadsworth's right, it will be remembered, rose the eminence of Oak Hill, which was, in fact, a continuation of Seminary Ridge and which, if seized by the Confederates, would give them an enfilading fire on the troops holding the open McPherson ridge. Awake to the possibility of danger from this quarter, as the message just quoted indicates, Wadsworth had already sent an orderly thither to reconnoitre, and when Hall's battery returned from its travels despatched it in the same direction under shelter of the woods. Howard, on his part, gave orders that two of his divisions, as they reached the field, should be told off to occupy this important point and the ground between it and Wadsworth's right.<sup>2</sup> But it was then too late. Hall, on his way toward Oak Hill, was soon met by Wadsworth's orderly, returning from his reconnoissance, and was told that he was taking the battery "directly into the enemy's lines, which were advancing from this direction." Hall rode forward until fired upon by the

<sup>1</sup> 45 W. R., p. 463.

<sup>2</sup> 43 W. R., p. 702.





Confederate skirmishers, when he turned and counter-marched his battery.<sup>1</sup>

Hurrying this disconcerting news on to Doubleday and Howard, Wadsworth waited for what was now inevitable, the sound of Confederate guns from Oak Hill. Not long after noon they opened with telling effect upon Cutler in his exposed position, and Wadsworth at once withdrew the brigade to the shelter of the woods on Seminary Ridge, north of the railroad, where it took a position facing northwest and began putting up breast-works of rails. For the Iron Brigade no change of position was necessary, since the McPherson woods gave it sufficient protection; but the other brigades and batteries of the First Corps were stationed much less advantageously. Howard, now fully aware of the danger from both Rodes and Early, ordered that the two divisions of his corps should deploy on the plain north of the town, at right angles to the First Corps.

Looking east from his station on Seminary Hill, Wadsworth could observe Howard's "Dutchmen"—Schimmelfennig with Von Amsberg and Krzyzanowski, Barlow with Von Gilsa and Ames—coming out from Gettysburg, but in the hazy atmosphere of that sultry July noon and in the press of his own occupations he could not estimate their strength (seven thousand men and at first ten guns)<sup>2</sup> or perceive how far to the east their line stretched. He could, however, see that the left of their line did not extend far enough to connect with his own right, and presently Baxter's brigade, sent by Doubleday from the reserve division on Seminary Ridge, passed him on its way to fill in part this dangerous gap. With these provisions made for taking care of the attack from the north, Wadsworth felt confident that the main body of the First Corps could keep off the enemy from the west, thus delaying Lee's concentration and holding Gettysburg as a point at which Meade could

<sup>1</sup> 43 W. R., p. 360.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 725.



concentrate his army. Howard, coming at about two o'clock to inspect the position of the First Corps, gave orders in person to Wadsworth to hold the ridge as long as possible.<sup>1</sup> Against the onrush of Lee's veterans this body of troops in which Reynolds had taken such pride must maintain itself with more than its wonted firmness; in Wadsworth and all his men was the iron will to prove by their deeds that the sacrifice of his life which their commander had made had not been in vain.

The attack began from the north at about 2.30, the brigades of Rodes's division moving forward along both the eastern and the western slopes of the ridge. Their advance, however, was not simultaneous, and Baxter's brigade was able first to repel the attack on its right and then, changing front, to meet that on its left. The Confederate troops here, taken by surprise at short range, were severely punished, and Cutler, with the coolness and alertness that characterized his handling of the brigade in this battle, sent forward his men on their flank to complete the work of demoralization. After this brilliant affair, in which many prisoners were captured, Cutler turned his attention to another of Rodes's brigades sweeping across his front to attack Stone at the McPherson farm, part of whose line was facing north along the turnpike, and here again he poured in an effective cross fire. Thus, thanks to the adroitness of Baxter and Cutler in taking advantage of their opponents' mistakes, thanks, too, to Hill's inaction, this attack from the north was repulsed.

By three o'clock, however, Hill had got under way, sending two brigades of Heth's division—Brockenbrough with 1,070 men, Pettigrew with 2,900 men—against the Iron Brigade stationed in the McPherson woods and Biddle's brigade on its left. The Iron Brigade, having suffered but little in the morning engagement in which it had captured Archer, was both fresh and strong; the

<sup>1</sup> 43 W. R., p. 266.



disposition of its regiments had received the approval of Wadsworth and Doubleday, and the men had been told how much depended on their steadfastness. "The devoted men of this brigade stood to action for three hours, saw the rebel line form for the attack upon them in double and treble lines, knew we could not hope for reinforcements or adequate force to meet them, as well as the impossibility of holding the position assigned them [us], and unflinchingly awaited the blow."<sup>1</sup> "We have come to stay!" had been their cry as they plunged into the woods in the morning; that pledge they were now about to redeem in terms that the whole army would wonder at.

The Confederate force, consisting of fresh troops, was in greater numbers than its opponents and came on with spirit, but it was received with a firm front, and a sharp conflict ensued. Where the Twenty-fourth Michigan met the Twenty-sixth North Carolina the contest proved particularly destructive.<sup>2</sup> In the end the assailants were repulsed. Meanwhile, the pressure from the north continued. Baxter and Cutler maintained themselves gallantly, but at last, their ammunition gone and their numbers greatly reduced, they were withdrawn behind the woods on Seminary Ridge. To take their place Doubleday sent his last reserve brigade, that of Paul, containing thirteen hundred men, fully equal to the desperate work assigned them. Most ominous fact of all, however, on the high ground beyond Wilderness Run, a line of gray (Pender's division, 6,200 strong, consisting of brigades commanded by Lane, Thomas, Perrin, and Scales) could be seen extending a brigade front beyond either flank of the Union line. Under these circumstances it was wise not to attempt further resistance in the advanced position on the McPherson ridge; the First Corps artillery, twenty-two guns, and a portion of the infantry were accordingly withdrawn

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Iron Brigade at Gettysburg, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> The percentage of loss in the 24th Michigan was 80; in the 26th North Carolina, 88.5.—(History of the 24th Michigan, p. 172.)

to Seminary Ridge, there to make a last stand, and Doubleday despatched an aide to Howard, importuning him for additional troops from the reserve on Cemetery Hill, or, failing that assistance, an order to fall back thither.

This portentous danger was fully evident to Wadsworth, stationed on the ridge at a point near the place where it is crossed by the Cashtown turnpike, but in spite of the great preponderance of the Confederates in numbers and their presence to the north as well as to the west, his confidence had not yet begun to fail. Knowing well that "if hopes were dupes, fears may be liars" and exalted by the successful resistance that the First Corps had so far made, he still believed that the defenders of Seminary Ridge would be able to repel the attack about to be launched against them, even if the attack were to prove the most formidable of all. But not long before four o'clock, while they waited for the first signs of the enemy's advance, Wadsworth's attention was drawn by one of his aides to the open ground in their rear, north of the town, where the Eleventh Corps was supposed to be stationed. Of which army was the long battle line there a part? Could there be any doubt? When told that the skirmishers were apparently on the side of it toward the town, Wadsworth, evidently thinking of the behavior of the Eleventh Corps at Chancellorsville, replied that what seemed like a skirmish line must be men placed in the rear to drive up stragglers and skulkers. Still uneasy, Kress and others about him continued to peer through the smoke and haze in an endeavor to establish the identity of some battle flag. When at last the excellent field-glasses of the chief of artillery, Colonel Wainwright, made out the Confederate colors, it was plain that the Eleventh Corps had been driven in.<sup>1</sup> If that were true, the case of the

<sup>1</sup> The rout of the Eleventh Corps was caused by the attack of Early's division from the northeast and by the renewal of the attack by a portion of Rodes's division from the north.

First Corps was indeed critical. Already it was out-flanked; half an hour later, twenty minutes later, it would be cut off altogether from the rest of the army.

Braced to resist on Seminary Hill, Wadsworth in an instant had to readjust himself to the impending necessity of retreat. In a turmoil of mortification and anger he sent word to Doubleday of the new peril, and then addressed himself to the work of holding back the enemy, whose approaching lines, having dipped down out of sight as they crossed Willoughby Run, were now beginning to show again over the McPherson ridge. Slowly, before this imposing advance, the remnants of Stone's men and of the Iron Brigade fell back from the positions about the McPherson farm buildings and in the woods which they had defended so stoutly. Close upon them came two Confederate brigades, commanded by Scales and Perrin, marching with wonderful steadiness, aligned as if on parade. "In many cases the colors of regiments were advanced several paces in front of the line."<sup>1</sup> To shatter this attack was imperative, particularly in view of the exposed situation of Paul's brigade on the right, for which a gain of ten minutes might make the difference between capture and safety; but, since the lines of blue and gray were in such proximity, there was risk that the Federal artillery, if it did not withhold its fire for a space, might harm friend as well as foe. Wadsworth, near the batteries of Stevens and Stewart, hesitated long before giving their commanders the order; he yielded only when it was plain that the necessity had become paramount and absolute. At this, the crisis of the battle, no matter what the cost, the enemy must be checked as decisively as he had been checked earlier in the day.

When these broken ranks of blue, avoiding the canister of the batteries as best they might, had made their

<sup>1</sup> 6th Wis., p. 175.

way back to the ridge, they once again faced the enemy undauntedly. It could not be said that they were unsupported. North of the railroad was Stewart himself with three of his guns; the other three, commanded by Lieutenant Davison, were on the small space of ground between the cut and the pike; south of the pike roared Stevens's battery.<sup>1</sup> It was against this concentrated fire that Scales's brigade was advancing. Buell, the Cannoneer, who served one of the guns in the half-battery commanded by Davison, in the rear of which Wadsworth now found himself, has described the scene vividly. To obtain an enfilading fire upon Scales's line, Stewart and Davison had swung their guns about so that the muzzles faced southwest. "This change of front gave us a clean rake along the Rebel line for a whole brigade length, but it exposed our right flank to the raking volleys of their infantry near the pike, who at that moment began to get up again and come on. Then for seven or eight minutes ensued probably the most desperate fight ever waged between artillery and infantry at close range without a particle of cover on either side. They gave us volley after volley in front and flank, and we gave them double canister as fast as we could load. The Sixth Wisconsin and Eleventh Pennsylvania men crawled up over the bank of the cut or behind the rail fence in rear of Stewart's caissons and joined their musketry to our canister, while from the north side of the cut flashed the chain-lightning of the Old Man's half-battery in one solid streak!"<sup>2</sup>

Under this deadly storm the first line of Scales's men wavered and fell back; then it rallied and returned to the attack with a steady fire of musketry. Stewart's men all the time, in the excitement and inspiration of the high noon of battle, were working their guns

<sup>1</sup> Stevens's battery expended about fifty-seven rounds of canister in repelling this attack.—(Maine at Gettysburg, p. 85.)

<sup>2</sup> The Cannoneer, p. 68.



SEMINARY RIDGE, GETTYSBURG.

View looking toward the McPherson Ridge, taken from the point where General Wadsworth was at the time of the last Confederate attack, on the first day.



with the regularity of a machine. Davison, an ankle shattered, and with other wounds, too, propped up by one of his men, continued to give orders until weakness overcame even his "grim, stoical pluck"; then Wadsworth, who had been laboring as if one of them, cheered them on and held them to their work. So destructive was the battery's fire proving that it almost seemed that the enemy's charge might fail altogether.<sup>1</sup> But the other Confederate brigade, attacking south of the seminary, had been successful and had already gained possession of that part of the ridge; the Union artillery and infantry there were in full retreat. At this moment an aide appeared hunting for Wadsworth with the expected order from Doubleday to fall back to Cemetery Hill. The incorrigible fighter whom he sought was in the act of sighting one of Davison's twelve-pounders. "Tell General Doubleday," Wadsworth shouted through the roar, "that I don't know anything about strategy; but we are giving the Rebels hell with these guns, and I want to give them a few more shots before we leave."<sup>2</sup>

Keen though his battle passion was, Wadsworth wrenched himself away, for the moments were nearly all told in which the remnant of Union artillery and infantry could slip between the converging Confederates to safety. Fortunately, one advantage of the desperate and devastating last stand on Seminary Ridge, maintained by Doubleday's men with "deliberate valor" as if the whole Army of the Potomac were within call, accrued to them at once. The Confederate pursuit from the west was far from vigorous; its caution verged upon

<sup>1</sup> The commander of this Confederate brigade, General Scales, who was himself disabled, reported that all his field-officers but one were killed or wounded.—(44 W. R., p. 670.) The brigade lost half its 1,070 men. After the war General Scales told Dawes that the fire of Stewart's battery was the most destructive he had known in the war.—(6th Wisconsin, p. 175, note.)

<sup>2</sup> See War Papers, Commandery of District of Columbia of the Loyal Legion, I, 9.



timidity. Skirmishers, it is true, played havoc with the Union battery horses and caused the abandonment of one gun and some caissons; but the damage from this quarter was small, out of all proportion to the men's expectation of danger. Generals Lee and A. P. Hill, reaching the ridge while the battle smoke was still hanging in the trees, could perceive that the town was in Ewell's possession; but the sights that the Confederate commander had witnessed on the way to the ridge and the reports brought to him from Heth's and Pender's divisions gave him pause.<sup>1</sup> Hill said that he had never known the Federals to fight so well.<sup>2</sup> After the indomitable resistance of the First Corps, it was hard for Lee to dismiss the inference that Meade's army was close at hand, and the approach of the Twelfth Corps from the southeast during the last moments of the battle was a circumstance that highly increased such a probability. Whether the inference were correct or not—and with his cavalry gone it was impossible to ascertain the facts—Lee must give it weight. In view of the impression thus produced upon the Confederate commander and of the hours gained thereby, the sacrifice made by the First Corps was one that added to its glory. Its belief in the value of this sacrifice was expressed by Wadsworth three days later to the commander of the Twenty-fourth Michigan. "Colonel Morrow, the only fault I find with you is that you fought too long, but God only knows what would have become of the Army of the Potomac if you had not held the ground as long as you did."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The six brigades engaged from these two divisions numbered 10,000 men. The "reports of casualties," which includes also the engagement of July 3, gives their loss as 3,962.—(44 W. R., p. 344.) A seventh brigade, Lane's, 1,600 strong, of Pender's division, was delayed by the fire of some of Buford's cavalry, stationed on Seminary Ridge, south of the Fairfield Road. It did not attack, and suffered slight loss.—(44 W. R., p. 667.)

<sup>2</sup> 43 W. R., p. 272. His remark was reported to the colonel of the 24th Michigan, who was a prisoner.

<sup>3</sup> 24th Mich., p. 168.

Though but haltingly pursued by Hill, the broken detachments of the First Corps, picking their way through the streets of an unknown town in search of a designated place of safety the position of which was also unknown, suffered no small loss at the hands of Ewell's men, now swarming everywhere. The number of prisoners taken from Wadsworth's division was 627,<sup>1</sup> most of them from Cutler's brigade, which covered the retreat. In Robinson's division, of which Paul's brigade had farther to travel, the loss was even heavier (983). Of the 3,500 men whom Wadsworth had taken into battle in the morning he had at the end of the day less than 1,300.

The hill toward which the troops of the First and Eleventh Corps were now making their way rises by a gentle slope from the fields south of Gettysburg. In the angle between the converging roads from Emmitsburg and Baltimore which meet at its base lay the small cemetery of the town. Here, where were posted Howard's scanty reserves, with batteries already protected by earthworks, was the nucleus of safety. A bulwark even stronger was the presence among the group of officers by the cemetery gate of Hancock, sent by Meade to take command. His gallant figure was known throughout the army, and where he was troops felt that they had a true leader. With the aid of other able soldiers, such as Buford and Warren, Hancock brought a measure of order out of the chaos of artillery and infantry that choked the roads and overflowed into the fields. An infantry support was needed for Stevens's battery, which Hancock had sent to Culp's Hill, the bold, heavily wooded eminence a half-mile or less to the east. If this hill were not held by the Federals their present position would be untenable; yet it was a post of danger, for at present there were not troops in sufficient

<sup>1</sup> 43 W. R., pp. 173, 174. The total loss of the First Corps in "captured or missing" was 2,162.

force to occupy it securely, and, in spite of the waning day, it was inconceivable that the Confederates should not make some attempt to win it. Wadsworth, "by no means daunted or weakened by the day's work, but . . . still full of fight,"<sup>1</sup> was assigned by Hancock to this place. While he was gathering up such fragments of his division as came to hand, he was gladdened by the unexpected appearance of the Seventh Indiana, which was the strongest regiment of Cutler's brigade and which, detached by Reynolds's order in the morning to accompany the First Corps trains, had just arrived from Emmitsburg. With this increase of five hundred men Wadsworth set his troops in motion for their new position. An officer who had gone in advance to the right to establish the line there encountered on his way back a Confederate scout and captured him. The scout was hastening to report to Ewell that Culp's Hill was unoccupied.<sup>2</sup> With all the greater speed, therefore, Wadsworth, when he reached the pleasant groves of the hill-side, put his men to work throwing up intrenchments, and there was rest for none until the defences were secure. Fortunately, as the shadows lengthened, Ewell's troops opposite Culp's Hill made no sign of attacking, and the advance brigades of the Federal Third and Twelfth Corps had already reached the field. Behind them, from south and southeast, over far-stretched roads, the remaining corps of the scattered Army of the Potomac were hurrying hither; there was time for supper, for rest—for the solemn moment of roll-call.

After the day's ordeal of fire Wadsworth could rejoice that all the members of his staff were safe; Craig, also, was untouched. In spite of the hail of bullets that had beaten upon Stewart's battery in that fierce ten minutes, Wadsworth himself had not a scratch. Other-

<sup>1</sup> From a letter of General Morgan, Hancock's chief of staff, quoted by Hancock in the *Atlantic Monthly* for December, 1876, p. 330.

<sup>2</sup> Address by General J. W. Hofman.—(Reynolds Memorial, p. 41.)

wise the tale of disaster was a fearful one. The Twenty-fourth Michigan, the largest of Wadsworth's eleven regiments, went into battle with 496 men; that evening the number with the flag was 99.<sup>1</sup> Only four field-officers of the Iron Brigade escaped without injury. As the men told over the hours of the struggle and noted how and where this and that comrade had been lost, there was many a story of desperate gallantry. Besides the dead, hundreds of wounded men were lying in the McPherson woods and on Seminary Hill beyond the reach of all friendly aid and comfort.<sup>2</sup>

War is many-sided in its motives and passions, a fact that the aftermath of the First Corps' battle now brought forth. Major-General John Newton arrived on that very evening, despatched by Meade in haste to supersede Doubleday. As it happened, one of the first sights witnessed by Howard when he reached the field at half-past eleven on the morning of July 1 had been the withdrawal of Hall's battery and Cutler's regiments from Seminary Hill toward the town—a spectacle which prompted him to send a message to Meade that the First Corps had fallen back. Later in the day, between half-past four and half-past five, Howard, who was not a soldier abounding in chivalry and who was smarting

<sup>1</sup> History of the 24th Michigan, p. 180.

<sup>2</sup> The following statement of the strength and losses of Wadsworth's division on July 1 at Gettysburg is computed from the official records, and from the figures given in *The Iron Brigade at Gettysburg*, New York at Gettysburg, and *Fox's Regimental Losses*. The official statement of losses is for all three days of the battle, but as there was hardly any loss at Culp's Hill these figures may be considered as holding good for July 1. The 7th Indiana of Cutler's brigade is not included, as it was not engaged on July 1. Its loss is given as ten.

	KILLED	WOUNDED	MISSING OR CAPTURED	TOTAL LOSS	NO. ENGAGED	NO. RE- MAINING
1st Brigade (Iron Brigade).	189	774	249	1,212	1,883	671
2d Brigade.....	142	506	349	997	1,621	624
7th Indiana (not engaged).	....	....	....	....	....	500
Total.....	331	1,280	598	2,209	3,504	1,795

under the mortification of the retreat of his own corps and the presence of Hancock, repeated this misleading statement to Hancock, who in his turn communicated it to the commanding general;<sup>1</sup> Meade, receiving the news at the end of a harassing day, in which the unexpected encounter at Gettysburg had not only shattered his plans but imperilled his army, found in Doubleday the victim which his temper demanded. The change of commanders was not one to approve itself to men who had fought under Reynolds. Though Doubleday was not a "popular commander," he was respected by his men as a hard fighter—and this respect had been much increased by his handling of them in the day's battle. Newton, on the other hand, came to them unknown; and in respect to fighting skill he remained unknown, for he never commanded them on the field.<sup>2</sup>

The quiet of that night for the Army of the Potomac was succeeded by further respite on the following morning and early afternoon. During those hours Meade's remaining corps were reaching the field and taking position. Wadsworth's men, lying behind their breastworks under the shadow of the oak-trees, waited for the expected attack upon their stronghold. As the afternoon wore on and they were still unmolested, their thoughts were held by the distant roar of the terrific struggle on their left which has made memorable the names of Peach Orchard, Wheat Field, Devil's Den, Little Round Top.

<sup>1</sup> 43 W. R., p. 356.

<sup>2</sup> Newton was displaced by the merging of the First Corps with the Fifth in March, 1864. Doubleday left the Army of the Potomac almost immediately after the battle of Gettysburg was over and did not serve with it again. His bitterness against Meade is shown in his testimony before the Committee on the Conduct of the War and in the account of the battle in his book, *Chancellorsville and Gettysburg*. It is exhibited without any restraint whatever in his narrative of the first day's battle, the MS. of which is in the possession of Mr. James W. Wadsworth. Here he declares that Meade at first refused to allow him to prepare a report of the fight of July 1, and that it was only when General Newton refused to make the report that Meade permitted Doubleday to do it. The correspondence on p. 256 of 43 W. R. is indicative of some trouble of this sort.

Suddenly the sound of the beginning of conflict near at hand drew back the minds of Wadsworth's men to their own situation. They were on the crest of the hill facing north. From their right the line ran south and had been held by the Twelfth Corps, but the exigencies of the contest at the other end of the battle-field had caused Meade to order thither all the troops of that corps except Greene's brigade. As Greene was endeavoring to stretch his men over the ground from which the other brigades had withdrawn, the Confederate attack struck his whole line. On Greene's extreme right the enemy had little more to do than to walk into the intrenchments. Nearer the top of the hill his men made a determined resistance, but the peril was such that he sent to Wadsworth and to Howard for help. These two generals rushed off three regiments each, seven hundred and fifty men in all, but the fighting value of the two groups proved to be by no means equal; "kicked into action," indeed, is the expression used by a member of Wadsworth's staff in describing the means by which one of Howard's regiments was brought to perform its duty. At length, relieved by the returning troops of the Twelfth Corps, Wadsworth's and Howard's men went back to their own commands.

Meanwhile, on Wadsworth's left a furious assault by Hays's "Louisiana Tigers" and Hoke's brigade had been made up the little valley between Cemetery Hill and Culp's Hill. Again the main attack avoided Wadsworth's strong position; but with this activity on both sides of him he was kept in continual apprehension as to what might happen in his own front. During these alarms and excursions, Lieutenant-Colonel Kress, having returned from carrying an order and not finding his commander, was told that he was out in front of the line, dismounted. "The ground was covered with trees and was steep and rocky," so the aide tells the story now; "I also had to dismount, and climbed the embankment and



found the general a short distance down the hill, only one orderly with him. He was under a lively fire of rifles from both front and rear, from enemies and friends. Fortunately, it was not difficult to convince him that he ought not to remain there long; he said he wanted to encourage the men!"

Again, in the morning of the next day, July 3, there was sharp fighting on Wadsworth's right, the result of which was to drive the enemy back. After this repulse, with little fear that Culp's Hill would again be attacked, he could give undivided attention to the marvellous and terrible battle drama which that afternoon was to unfold. The prolonged cannonading, the charge of Pickett's division, the fearful moments of close struggle, the drifting back of the gray lines in fragments—these, the culminating events of the battle of Gettysburg, both from their proportions and from their significance in the history of the war, constituted a spectacle the clutch of which upon the heart of the beholder was like the moment of the death agony. If it should prove that Lee had delivered his last blow, then his invasion of the North was also proved a failure.

Nothing is more characteristic of Wadsworth as a soldier than his attitude and temper during the period of eleven days between Lee's defeat at Gettysburg and the successful withdrawal of the Army of Northern Virginia over the Potomac at Williamsport.<sup>1</sup> The battle ardor of the volunteer commander, pushed to its highest intensity by the three days of conflict, demanded that the fight should be carried to a finish. The first evidence of this spirit in him was seen when, at the time of Pickett's charge, he sent an aide to Meade with the request that he be allowed to put his division in. When the offer reached Meade the attack had been repulsed, and Meade, busy with his staff in the work of attending

<sup>1</sup> From this point use the general map at the end of the book.



to the prisoners, replied that they were all right and did not need help. Great as was Wadsworth's disappointment, it took larger proportions when he perceived that no counter-attack—the "soul of the defence," in Henderson's expressive phrase<sup>1</sup>—was to be made. To his mind, the repulse of Lee should at all hazards be taken advantage of on the instant.

Yet Wadsworth could see for himself some of the reasons that explained the hesitation of the commanding general. "I think," he said in his testimony before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, "that General Meade did not, perhaps, appreciate fully the completeness of his victory. The terrible slaughter of our men produced, of course, a great impression upon the officers of our army. General Meade's head-quarters were almost in the line of battle, and were surrounded by great havoc."<sup>2</sup> The dead to be buried were numbered by thousands, the wounded to be cared for by tens of thousands. Furthermore, such of the survivors as were not exhausted by hard fighting were exhausted by hard marching. The need of supplies was immediate and imperative, the trains were remote. In the Sixth Wisconsin, for instance, the men had nothing to eat from the morning of July 3 to the evening of the next day; furthermore, nearly half of them were barefoot.<sup>3</sup> But the most powerful reason of all to urge Meade to caution was the difficulty of ascertaining and comprehending the extent of the damage suffered by the enemy. In default of that knowledge, he whose command of the Army of the Potomac was but a week old could not escape the magic of Lee's great name. Though determined on pursuit, Meade dared do nothing to bring on

<sup>1</sup> Stonewall Jackson, I, 173.

<sup>2</sup> C. W., Report of 1865, I, 415. "There was a tone amongst most of the prominent officers that we had quite saved the county for the time and that we had done enough; that we might jeopard all that we had won by trying to do too much."—(General Warren's testimony, *ibid.*, 378.)

<sup>3</sup> 6th Wisconsin, pp. 160, 185.

a general engagement. He was therefore stopped from following the Confederates by the passes through the South Mountain range, which they had used to reach the Cumberland Valley, and obliged to proceed first south along the east side of the ridge to Middletown and then west over South Mountain by the National Pike—a route considerably longer than the one that they had taken. Thus the first chance to strike at Lee in retreat was lost.

On July 4 detachments of men were upon the field succoring the wounded, burying the dead, and collecting arms. From the hour of noon the rain came down in torrents. Wadsworth took advantage of this day of rest to write his report of the battle of July 1. It is brief, as the products of his pen always were, but clear, consistent, and accurate. A characteristic touch occurs at the end. "The officers of my staff and command performed their whole duty without an exception. Under these circumstances I cannot particularly commend any of them without doing injustice to others equally meritorious."<sup>1</sup> This method of rendering justice at the expense of individual fame did not, it is hardly necessary to say, meet with the approval of all the officers in question.

On July 5 the Army of the Potomac began to move in pursuit of Lee; but it was not till the following day that Wadsworth's division and the First Corps marched. Once begun, the advance of the army was sufficiently energetic, though, as a result of the frequent and copious rains during the last fortnight, the heavy roads prevented it from being rapid. That night the First Corps encamped, after a ten-mile march, at Emmitsburg. The next day brought it within a short distance of Middletown, a hard march of over twenty-two miles. In crossing the Catoctin ridge the road was so rough and narrow that the men were frequently obliged to march in single file.

<sup>1</sup> 43 W. R., p. 267.

On July 8 the First Corps crossed South Mountain and bivouacked on its western flank near Boonesboro (eight miles). Even the macadamized National Road was in bad condition, and Meade was forced to allow a whole day for the corps at the rear of his column to get up; rations and shoes, too, must be distributed to hungry and barefoot men, and worn-out horses must be shod. But Confederates as well as Federals suffered from the downpourings of the heavens. The Potomac had risen unprecedentedly, and Lee, reaching Williamsport and Falling Waters, where he expected to cross, found not only his bridge burned by the Federal cavalry but the stream swollen several feet above the fording stage. Not a dozen miles distant from the assembled Army of the Potomac was the great Confederate commander, caught at last, it would seem, with the raging river in his rear.

Again the Union army nerved itself for battle. Its physical condition was mended somewhat: reinforcements had arrived; Lincoln, the whole North behind him, urged it on. If now, with Vicksburg captured, Lee's army might be destroyed, the Confederacy could not long survive.

On July 10 Meade set his army in motion for what he believed must be "the decisive battle of the war"; yet considerations of weight prevented him from pushing forward with ardor and relentlessness. He could ill afford, he felt, to sacrifice or even to prejudice the results of the victory just won; it was still on the cards that the daring Confederate commander might issue forth to attack him. "I desire," Meade wrote to Halleck on July 9, "to adopt such measures as in my judgment will tend to insure success, even though these may be deemed tardy."<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the operations of the next two days were governed by his purpose to "advance cautiously." At the end of that time his army was astride Antietam Creek, the left being advanced to

<sup>1</sup> 43 W. R., p. 86.

within striking distance of the enemy. "On the morning of the 12th of July," such is the testimony of General A. A. Humphreys, Meade's chief of staff, "General Meade expressed to me his views, which were to move the army forward and feel the enemy, and to attack them at such points as he should find it best to attack. We knew something of the general character of their position, but it was a very general knowledge. General Meade asked my opinion. I replied that I coincided with him; that I was in favor of the operation that he proposed, the advance of the army and a reconnaissance in force, as it is called, to be converted into an attack. We could not see the position of the enemy well; their skirmishers acted as a sort of curtain, to keep us from looking too closely at them. A circular note was therefore sent to corps commanders to meet at eight o'clock in the evening at general head-quarters; they were to be brought there for the purpose of receiving instructions and to give all the information they had collected during the day concerning the position of the enemy, etc."<sup>1</sup> At this council of the seven corps commanders of the Army of the Potomac, Wadsworth was present as representing the First Corps, General Newton being temporarily incapacitated and General Doubleday, wounded at Gettysburg in body as well as in spirit, having left the army. Besides Meade and Humphreys and these seven, there were present, crowded into the head-quarters tent, Warren, the chief engineer of the army, and Pleasonton, the chief of cavalry. Of the momentous discussion which then took place there is abundant record, six of the eleven men having later appeared before the inquisitorial Committee on the Conduct of the War. Since their testimony agrees in substance, though with much variety of interesting detail, the story of what happened may be told in Wadsworth's own words:

<sup>1</sup> C. W., Report of 1865, I, 395.

General Meade stated briefly the condition of our forces, giving his estimate of our army and the best information he had as to the numbers of the enemy, stating, as I think, that he believed we were superior to them in numbers, and he asked the corps commanders, commencing with the ranking officer, General Sedgwick, what they thought of the expediency of attacking the enemy the next morning. General Sedgwick, General Slocum, General Sykes, General French, and General Hays, who was temporarily commanding the Second Corps, pronounced decidedly against the attack. General Howard, General Pleasonton, and myself advised the attack. General Meade stated that he favored an attack; that he came there to fight the enemy and did not see any good reason why he should not fight them. But he said he could not take the responsibility of bringing on a general engagement against the advice of his commanders.

It will be observed that four of the officers who opposed the attack were the ranking officers of the army, next to General Meade, and held in every respect the highest positions in the army. The reasons for and against an attack were not discussed for some time, and I believe not until I asked that those generals who opposed the attack should state their reasons for it. General Sedgwick did not give at any length his reasons against an attack, but stated generally that General Meade had won a great victory, and he thought he ought not to jeopard all he had gained by another battle at that time. General Sykes and General French gave as a reason for not making an attack, as nearly as I can remember, that there was nothing between the enemy and Washington except our army, and that if it was overwhelmed Washington and Baltimore would be open to the enemy.

*Question.* Was not that true?

*Answer.* There was no force of any moment but that army, not enough to have resisted General Lee. General Warren, the engineer officer of General Meade's staff, made a strong and able argument in favor of an attack; and General Pleasonton likewise urged an attack. General Howard, who had voted for an attack, did not enter much into the discussion. I did not myself, except to meet the objection that there was nothing

between the enemy and Washington but our army, which I did by urging that our line of breastworks, the Antietam creek, and South Mountain gave us defensive lines, where we could certainly hold the enemy if repulsed in our assault; and that we had every reason to believe that the enemy were demoralized by their retreat and were short of ammunition. Some of the officers—I do not recollect whom—took the ground that the enemy would attack us if we did not attack them. I said that I did not believe that the enemy had ever come there to fight a battle; that so good an officer as General Lee never would take a position with his back on the river to fight a battle.<sup>1</sup>

The vote of the corps commanders being five to two against making an attack, the council broke up, with the understanding that they were, during the next twenty-four hours, to endeavor to gain further information as to the enemy's position and strength. "I was waiting in a hard rain on that dismal night to guide General Wadsworth back to our head-quarters," writes Colonel Meneely, "and I do not think that I ever heard any person in high position express so much regret at a positive mistake [such] as was made by the meeting and where different action had such splendid promise of success." The proposed reconnoissance in force that had been under discussion was not to be converted into a battle unless circumstances warranted it; yet the men whose words had weight because of their rank were all against it. They were willing to risk nothing. Warren and Humphreys, with their keen minds and fresh energy, indomitable fighters both as well as accomplished officers, had grasped the situation, but they were juniors and staff officers and had no vote. If Reynolds, now dead, if Hancock and Sickles, both wounded, could have been of the council, the result must have been different.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> C. W., 1865, I, 415, 416.

<sup>2</sup> Wadsworth, Howard, and Pleasonton were in error in supposing Lee without ammunition but right in supposing that he was trying to escape at the first opportunity. The error of the other corps commanders was in thinking that Lee was likely to attack. "I still think," testified General



The information gathered on the next day was, owing to the thick weather, of little decisive value. In front of the First Corps, so Wadsworth reported, the line of the enemy was a mile distant. The ground rose gradually from the Federal position to heavy woods on the edge of which the Confederates were intrenched.<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere, too, it appeared they were strongly posted. In spite of the reports, either vague or unfavorable, from his commanders, and in spite of the vote of the council, Meade now decided upon action. The pressure from Washington was becoming more and more insistent; failure to advance to the attack would there be counted as much against him as defeat in case of actual battle. At nine o'clock that evening, therefore, he finally issued orders for the reconnoissance in force, the movement to begin at seven the next morning, July 14. But when the Union troops, so long held back, moved forward, they found the Confederate pickets withdrawn; the intrenchments behind which Lee's worn and wasted veterans had made such an imposing show of strength were empty. During the night, thanks to the rapidly subsiding river and to a rebuilt pontoon bridge, Lee had begun his retreat; it was accomplished during the next forenoon with only slight loss. The Maryland campaign was ended.<sup>2</sup>

Humphreys before the Committee on the Conduct of the War (1865, I, 397) "that it would have been better to have made the reconnoissance in force, and have made an attack if we had found some parts of the enemy's line were not as strong as others. We might, perhaps, have found toward the right that we could have attacked them. It was very strong ground, and if we had made an attack there is no doubt that we should have lost very severely. But I cannot pretend to say now whether, if I had seen all that ground, I should or should not have counselled an attack. It would have been right for us to have made that reconnoissance in force and to have been guided afterwards by the developments made by that reconnoissance."

<sup>1</sup> 45 W. R., p. 674.

<sup>2</sup> The slowness of a part of Meade's army in marching forward on the morning of July 14 is worth noting. The withdrawal of Lee's pickets was not discovered on the left till half-past seven. Buford, in command of the cavalry there, then went in pursuit, but none of the infantry on the left apparently made any attempt to follow the enemy toward Falling Waters, where Hill's



This fiasco at Williamsport seemed an ignoble sequel to the glory of Gettysburg, and for once Wadsworth was out of conceit with war. As usual he was prompt to act upon his feeling. General Newton, having recovered from his disability, was again in command of the First Corps; Wadsworth's own division had less than a brigade's strength; and as he had always contended that there were in the army too many general officers there was at this juncture every reason why he should ask to be relieved. His request was at once granted and he started forthwith for Washington.

Arrived at the capital, Wadsworth soon made his way to the White House, his appearance there being the cause of the following entry in the diary of Lincoln's young secretary, John Hay:

*July 16.* . . . This evening at tea was talking with Lieutenant-Colonel Alexander and Judge Whiting. They agreed in ascribing vast importance to the crushing of Lee at Williamsport. . . .

General Wadsworth came in. He said in answer to Alexander's question, "Why did he escape?" "Because nobody stopped him," rather gruffly. Wadsworth says that at a council of war of corps commanders, held on Sunday the 12th, he was present, on account of sickness of his corps commander, he, Wadsworth, being temporarily in command of the corps. On the question of fight or no fight the weight of authority was against fighting. French, Sedgwick, Slocum, and [Sykes and Hays] strenuously opposed a fight. Meade was in favor of it. So was Warren, who did most of the talking on that side, and Pleasonton was very eager for it, as was also Wadsworth himself. The non-fighters thought or seemed to think that if we did not attack, the enemy would; and even Meade thought he was in for action,

and Longstreet's corps were crossing during the forenoon. When Buford reached Lee's rear guard at Falling Waters he found that Kilpatrick's cavalry, coming from Meade's right flank by way of Williamsport, had arrived before him. Kilpatrick had discovered the withdrawal of the pickets on the right at three o'clock.—(43 W. R., p. 990.)

had no idea that the enemy intended to get away at once. Howard had little to say on the subject.

Meade was in favor of attacking in three columns of twenty thousand men each. Wadsworth was in favor of doing as Stonewall Jackson did at Chancellorsville—double up the left and drive them down on Williamsport. Wadsworth said to Hunter, who sat beside him, "General, there are a good many officers of the regular army who have not yet entirely lost the West Point ideas of Southern superiority.<sup>1</sup> That sometimes accounts for an otherwise unaccountable slowness of attack."<sup>2</sup>

The chagrin felt by some of those who first learned that Lee had given his antagonist the slip has been described by Noah Brooks, the newspaper correspondent, who, having reached the army on the morning of July 14, had pressed on to Falling Waters. "Meade's headquarters, on my return, presented a chap-fallen appearance. Here I met Vice-President Hamlin. . . . As we met, he raised his hands and turned away his face with a gesture of despair. Later on I came across General Wadsworth, who almost shed tears while he talked to us about the escape of the rebel army."<sup>3</sup>

It is easy, of course, to disparage Wadsworth's opinion concerning what should have been the battle of Williamsport, to say that his judgment was not that of a professional soldier, to bring into court the evidence that we now possess of the strength of Lee's position and his willingness to receive attack; yet the point of the matter is that Lee's unmolested escape into Virginia was the natural outcome of a series of causes all having their spring, as Lincoln put it, in "a purpose to get the enemy across the river again without a further collision," rather

<sup>1</sup> On July 17, 1863, Sedgwick, explaining to his sister why Meade had not attacked Lee at Williamsport, wrote: "I am tired of risking my corps in such unequal contests."—(Correspondence of Major-General John Sedgwick, II, 132.) Sedgwick also says (p. 135) that Newton, though not present at the council, was known to be against the proposed attack.

<sup>2</sup> This extract has been supplied by the kindness of Mrs. John Hay.

<sup>3</sup> Washington in Lincoln's Time, p. 95.

than in "a purpose to prevent his crossing and to destroy him."<sup>1</sup> In Wadsworth's case, the failure to fight at Williamsport provoked exasperation because it was the culminating instance of an attitude that he, with his impulsive ardor and singleness of vision, could not comprehend. In his conception, to be a soldier meant to use the strength of an army to the utmost and without relenting in order that the enemy might be crippled and overcome. This belief, too, was no mere matter of temperament; it was the conviction of a man who, knowing the value of energy and efficiency in the conduct of affairs, assumed that those qualities were of universal applicability. The situation, as it seemed to him, must be met as a man of high financial courage would meet a panic in the world of business. While the time of stress prevails, no moment must be lost, no thought left uncanvassed, no deed undone that will contribute even in the smallest degree to the desired result. It was because Meade's generals—and to a certain extent Meade himself—seemed to regard the crisis as already past, seemed not to be straining every nerve to deal Lee another blow, that Wadsworth blamed them as he did. Gettysburg, observes Henderson, "was pre-eminently a battle of lost opportunities,"<sup>2</sup> and the scope of his remark may well be extended to include the remainder of the campaign.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lincoln to Halleck.—(45 W. R., p. 567.)

<sup>2</sup> Stonewall Jackson, II, 488.

<sup>3</sup> Of the situation at Williamsport Major-General George B. Davis writes: "On the Confederate side a desperate chance was taken, not justified by the strength and situation of the opposing armies; not warranted even by the cautious and sluggish temperament of the Union commander. The management of the Army of the Potomac was halting, dilatory, wanting in firm direction, and, to a degree, irresolute and unskilful. An opportunity such as rarely occurs in war presented itself and was not availed of; and the Army of Northern Virginia was permitted to escape from a situation which should have gone far to compass its defeat, if not its utter discomfiture."—(From Gettysburg to Williamsport, Military Historical Society of Massachusetts Papers, III, 469.)



STATUE OF BRIGADIER-GENERAL JAMES S. WADSWORTH.

To be erected at Gettysburg by the State of New York.

From a photograph of the scale model by R. Hintoo Perry.



## CHAPTER VIII

### BETWEEN BATTLES

RELEASE from the Army of the Potomac did not for Wadsworth mean release from active devotion to the cause of the Union. The firmness and skill which, as military governor of Washington, he had shown in establishing and protecting the freedmen in their new rights now made him of value to the administration as adviser in the unfamiliar fields which its policy of emancipation had obliged it to enter.

During the first half of the year 1863 the work of arming the blacks had progressed notably in spite of conservative opposition. In Massachusetts, Governor Andrew had raised two regiments of volunteers; in the Southwest the task of organizing the regiments that were eventually designated United States Colored Troops was under the personal charge of Adjutant-General Lorenzo Thomas. On that evening in July when the men of the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts followed their devoted colonel, Robert Gould Shaw, up the battlements of Fort Wagner, they proved once for all the fighting quality of their race.

But the negro who could thus be brought under arms to serve the nation in what had now become a war for freedom as well as for union constituted only one part of the problem that the government had on its hands. The care of the negro laborer and his family was becoming a work as urgent and important in the Mississippi Valley as Wadsworth had found it in the District of Columbia in 1862, and after the surrender of Vicksburg on July 4, 1863, it assumed proportions of greater

magnitude than ever. Both the plantations and the freedmen who had worked them were now under control of the national government, and every consideration of expediency and necessity required that, as soon as possible, some system be put into effect adequate to the exigencies of the new times.

In addressing themselves to this complicated business, Lincoln and Stanton were not without information, though much of it was so incomplete, so confused, and so prejudiced as to form an unsafe basis for judgment. They had the jaunty and bustling reports of the peripatetic adjutant-general, who, if rumor is to be believed, had been sent on this mission chiefly to get him out of harm's—that is, out of Stanton's—way, and who recommended the reasonableness of the new policy of arming the blacks by sending to the guard-house such soldiers as, when invited by him to express their opinions, ventured to differ from him in regard to it.<sup>1</sup> From the military commanders also came official communications, and when Grant sent his superintendent of contrabands, Chaplain John Eaton, to Washington to report in person, the information obtained was of the highest value. Furthermore, the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission, consisting of Robert Dale Owen, James McKaye, and Samuel G. Howe, appointed by Stanton in March, 1863, had in June made a preliminary report and was now industriously pursuing its investigations. Lastly, the authorities at Washington had the benefit of the advice, admonitions, and importunities of Northern friends of the negro. In this multitude of counselors there was less wisdom than confusion; and so, in the early autumn, when the success of the draft had been but moderate and when the President was about to issue a call for three hundred thousand volunteers, when, too, in view of the approaching session of Congress, it was desirable for the administration to deter-

<sup>1</sup> Grant, Lincoln, and the Freedmen, p. 55.



mine what kind of measure for the management of the freedmen's affairs it wished to have passed,—at this time it was decided to send Wadsworth to the Mississippi Valley to look into and to report upon the condition both of the colored troops there and of the non-military part of the negro population. In this wise Lincoln and Stanton hoped to gain what they needed to know in order to deal skilfully with the batteries of congressmen and committees that were sure to assail them during the coming winter.

Wadsworth's instructions from Stanton, dated October 9, 1863, ordered him to begin his inspection at Cairo, Illinois, and to proceed thence down the Mississippi to New Orleans, going elsewhere, too, if he found it desirable.<sup>1</sup> Being authorized to take one of his aides with him, he chose Captain T. E. Ellsworth, who had served on his staff ever since the early days of his military governorship.

Here belongs—to interrupt for a moment the course of the main narrative—a story told by the paymaster of the army from whom, since the beginning of the war, Wadsworth had received his pay. This official, supplying him with cash for his journey, recommended to him Paymaster Vedder at New Orleans as a person from whom he could obtain further sums if necessary. “No, sir,” replied Wadsworth, “I shall not apply to Major Vedder. While I am in the service I shall be paid only by you. And my reason for that is that I wish my account with the government to be kept with one paymaster only; for it is my purpose at the close of the war to call on you for an accurate statement of all the money I have received from the United States. The amount, whatever it is, I shall give to some permanent institution founded for the life relief of disabled soldiers. This is the least invidious way in which I can refuse pay for fighting for my country in her hour of danger.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 124 W. R., p. 872.

<sup>2</sup> *New York Tribune*, June 13, 1864.

Having completed his inspection at Cairo, where he found one hundred and twenty-five freedmen employed as laborers in the quartermaster's and commissary departments, receiving ten dollars a month and a ration as well as partial provision for their families, Wadsworth started down the river to meet Adjutant-General Thomas at Vicksburg. The latter placed his own steam-boat at Wadsworth's disposal and accompanied him as far as New Orleans. They stopped at Natchez, Port Hudson, and Baton Rouge to inspect camps and leased plantations, and Wadsworth made investigations at several places below New Orleans.<sup>1</sup> In the latter part of November he started on his return journey, making the trip by sea, and arriving in Washington on December 3.

The recruiting of colored troops Wadsworth found going forward, indeed, though in somewhat irregular fashion. At various points up and down the river were nuclei of regiments, some of which were growing steadily and others of which were at a stand-still, according to the ability and zeal of their officers. There was no system for designating these commands, and the adjutant-general, whatever his authority, had been more successful in getting the work under way than in unifying and controlling it. Though Wadsworth obtained consolidated reports showing the strength of the regiments recruiting in the Department of Tennessee and the Department of the Gulf, he had no certainty that the lists were complete or that the figures were accurate. In all, he made out about twenty thousand men, scattered through something like thirty-five regiments.<sup>2</sup> Of course the troops were untried and untrained, but in this respect it was as with their numerical strength: whenever a command

<sup>1</sup> Thomas to Stanton.—(124 W. R., p. 1044.)

<sup>2</sup> Between the lists furnished to Wadsworth and that given by Stanton's report (Senate Document, 38 Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 56, 57) there are great discrepancies in the designations of the regiments, in the names of their commanders, and in their numerical strength. In general, Wadsworth's figures run lower than the printed ones.

was fortunate in its officers the men responded to the stimulus of their new discipline, which was for them the gateway to the land of freedom.

Though at the present stage confusion existed in the organization of the colored troops, the work had been started right and there was little in the situation that time would not untangle. But with the non-military part of the population the case was far otherwise. Even if the freedmen had known how to take care of themselves, they had nothing to begin with, and most of the experiments made for their welfare had been bungled. If they were gathered into camps and fed on the unaccustomed army ration, they sickened and died at an alarming rate; if they were hired out to work on plantations leased from the government, they were in most cases heartlessly exploited by the lessees, whose loyalty was all too likely to prove a feebler passion than their greed. Where a man like Chaplain Eaton was in control the state of things was better, but men such as he were few and the circle of their influence was small. The conditions against which they had to contend were the inevitable result of the breaking up of slavery; not in a year, not even in a generation, was the heritage of that evil to be blotted out.

By what he had seen on this trip, brief though it was, Wadsworth had not merely brought himself abreast of the hour touching a subject which with each new month took on a fresh aspect; he had so corrected and fortified the judgments drawn from his experience with the negro in 1862 that they carried the weight not only of his force of character but of their own soundness as well. Though as a soldier the negro had revealed surprising capacity, that pathway of advance could not carry him far, for the war must soon be brought to an end. The profound problem, Wadsworth felt, was that of the negro's economic and political status, a field full of puzzles and pitfalls and one in which, as it later proved, experience was destined to run sharply athwart theory.

Complicated and baffling though the question was, it rang a note of challenge that roused in Wadsworth all his zeal as an anti-slavery man, an agriculturist, and an administrator. If the call should come to him to serve in this field, he was ready to answer with all his heart. One cannot but echo the judgment of his friend, Gurowski: "With his purity, with his clear-sightedness, and with his great practical sense, Wadsworth would have been the man to direct on a large scale organization of the freedmen."<sup>1</sup>

For this organization, it is worth noting, he had already formed a plan of his own. According to Gurowski, "Wadsworth's idea was to organize the freedmen into self-sustaining and self-defending agricultural colonies, locating them on confiscated and on new, hitherto uncultivated lands. Wadsworth was altogether averse to hiring out the freedmen as laborers; he considered it as a perpetuation of slavery, disguised with another name. Of course Wadsworth recognized the necessity of appointing directors, who were to preside, to organize, and to direct the labor of the colonists."<sup>2</sup> This proposal, of course, is merely another form of Lincoln's favorite scheme of colonization; also, it calls to mind James Wadsworth's proposal that the Indians should be removed from proximity to the race which made use of its superiority to oppress and to degrade them and should find in the undeveloped regions of the West an opportunity to grow unhampered toward civilization and citizenship. Whatever the intrinsic merits of this method of dealing with the freedmen, its advantages were not sufficiently obvious to enable it to make its way against the fierce passions of the Reconstruction period; moreover, when that period came its two strongest champions were no longer living to urge its adoption.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gurowski's Diary, 1863-65, p. 374.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 375.

<sup>3</sup> In Arnold's *Lincoln and Slavery*, p. 656; Carpenter's *Six Months at the White House*, p. 270; and in the Gettysburg edition of Nicolay and Hay's *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln*, XI, 130, is printed a letter dealing with the future treatment of the negro which purports to have been written

Having made his representations at the War Department and at the White House, Wadsworth was given a leave of absence which lasted over Christmas and New Year's day. On January 9, 1864, he was detailed to serve on a court of inquiry to investigate the conduct of Generals McCook, Crittenden, and Negley, who, in the rout at Chickamauga, after the Confederates had attacked and dispersed their commands, had left the field. This duty took Wadsworth to Nashville and Louisville and occupied the greater part of the month of February. The result of the inquiry was an exoneration of all three of the generals.<sup>1</sup>

Two letters on matters of family concern may be introduced here, though chronologically the place of the second is somewhat later. The first is to Wadsworth's youngest son:

LOUISVILLE, *Feb. 8, 1864.*

MY DEAR SON:—

I rec<sup>d</sup> some days since your letter by the way of Nashville. I am very glad to hear that you have made a satisfactory arrangement for prosecuting your studies at N. Haven, and that you have gone at your work with good courage. You will never regret the sacrifices you

by Lincoln to Wadsworth at about this time, but the genuineness of which is not vouched for. The occasion of the letter, if it is genuine, was a question from Wadsworth whether, "in the event of our complete success in the field, the same being followed by a loyal and cheerful submission on the part of the South, . . . universal amnesty should not be accompanied by universal suffrage." The gist of Lincoln's reply is in the sentence: "I cannot see, if universal amnesty be granted, how, under the circumstances, I can avoid exacting in return universal suffrage, or, at least, suffrage on the basis of intelligence and military service."

<sup>1</sup> For the records of the court, see 50 W. R., pp. 930-1053.

Another possibility of service for Wadsworth was in connection with Lincoln's plans for Florida, and resembled that which Wadsworth had considered in 1862. (See p. 153.) The President's proposal was to appoint a military governor who was to develop the Union sentiment that was believed to exist there, and the scope of whose command was to be extended with the advance of the Union troops. The scheme came to naught through various untoward circumstances, chief among them being the defeat of the Federal army at Olustee on February 20, 1864. If things had gone well, Wadsworth would undoubtedly have received the appointment.—(Letter of Colonel Meneely.)

make now to secure a good education. I have often deeply regretted that my own education was so deficient, especially in the classics. It has been a great barrier to my progress in other studies, especially the natural sciences, which I could not master thoroughly from want of some knowledge of the languages from which the technical terms were derived. I hope you will resolve to stick to it until you master them. Tho' if I get a command I shall keep my promise and take you with me.<sup>1</sup> There is now little or no prospect of this coming to pass. This court is a very tedious affair. It will keep us here for two weeks longer certainly, perhaps even longer. It is a much less interesting business than we had in the Missi. . . .

I hope you will be careful as to what acquaintances you make—& what company you keep. Now is the time for study. The harder you work the sooner it will be over, and the sooner we shall all be together at our dear home, where we have so much to interest and amuse us. If you get into gay company & neglect your studies it will only add a year or two to your exile. . . .

Your affectionate Father,

JA<sup>s</sup> S. WADSWORTH.

CULPEPER, VA.

*Apl.* 7, 1864.

DEAR MISS BURDEN:—

I have just recd. a letter from my son informing me that he has offered you his hand and heart, and that you have referred him to your father. Without waiting for his decision, which however must of course be conclusive, allow me to assure you that no event could give us more pleasure than to welcome you to our family, and that Mrs. Wadsworth and myself would find our greatest joy in watching over your happiness. You have already made quite as complete a conquest of Mrs. W. as of our dear Charlie. Before she was aware that he was interested in you, she spoke of you to me in the highest terms.

It is not for us to speak of our son except to tell

<sup>1</sup> In November, 1864, James W. Wadsworth was appointed aide on the staff of Major-General G. K. Warren, under whom he served until the end of the war, receiving then a "brevet-major" for services at Five Forks.



you of his faults, and I must accordingly say to you, for there should be no concealment in such a case, that you are not his first love—tho' I am sure you are his second. He has been for some years devotedly and tenderly attached to *Iron*. If any one could wean him from this passion and make him think a little more of science, literature, and cultivated society, I think they would make a very good fellow of him. I am sure you can do this good work better than any one else.

I can only say further, dear Miss Burden, that if your destinies should be united with those of our son, you will divide with him the parental care and affection with which we have watched over him, and which he has always dutifully returned.

With great respect and regard,

truly yrs,

JAS. S. WADSWORTH.

While Wadsworth was sitting through the long sessions of the court at Louisville, events were occurring at Washington which changed his fears to hopes and fixed his fate. Congress revived the grade of lieutenant-general; Grant, the hero of Vicksburg and Chattanooga, was nominated to the position, and on March 10 was assigned by the President to the command of all the armies of the United States. The days of Halleck's pedantry and indecision were over; concert of action on the part of the forces operating against the Confederacy was now assured. Under such fortunate auspices it was reasonable to believe that the campaign of the coming spring would end the war. A mighty push against Richmond, made as Grant could make it, must, it would seem, prove more than Lee's weakened army could withstand. The thought of fighting under Grant, a leader not sparing of conflict, brought all Wadsworth's battle ardor back in full flood; in this final forward movement he longed to bear a part, to lead once more into battle his loved brigades of the old First Division. To this end the splendid record which he and they had made at Gettysburg now did him good advocate's service at the



War Department. Manifestly, one fighter such as he, as Grant said of him later, was worth a whole brigade, and in the coming campaign there was to be no lack of hard fighting. Accordingly his request was granted, and on March 15 he was ordered to report to General Meade for assignment to duty with the Army of the Potomac.<sup>1</sup> When they heard the news, Wadsworth's family and friends, likewise remembering that record at Gettysburg, felt that his days were numbered.

<sup>1</sup> 107 W. R., p. 1151.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE WILDERNESS

A Battle-field, too, is great. Considered well, it is a kind of Quintessence of Labor; Labor distilled into its utmost concentration; the significance of years of it compressed into an hour. Here too thou shalt be strong, and not in muscle only if thou wouldst prevail. Here too thou shalt be strong of heart, noble of soul; thou shalt dread no pain or death, thou shalt not love ease or life."

—CARLYLE—*Past and Present*, book iii, chapter x.

MEADE'S orders of March 25, 1864, assigned Wadsworth to the command of the Fourth Division of the Fifth Corps, under Major-General G. K. Warren. This corps, with the Second under Hancock and the Sixth under Sedgwick, constituted the Army of the Potomac. It lay in winter quarters in the vicinity of Culpeper Court House, north of the Rapidan and along the line of the railroad from the Rappahannock to Manassas Junction. The Ninth Corps, under Burnside, which, rendezvousing at Annapolis, was receiving additions, mostly of raw troops, was designed to act with it in the coming campaign, though remaining an independent command and receiving orders direct from Grant.

In all the preparations which filled the first weeks of the spring there were many signs that the war henceforth was to be conducted on a professional basis; that non-military considerations were no longer to be allowed to interfere with whatever made for efficiency. With this spirit prevailing at head-quarters, it is significant of the esteem entertained for so unprofessional a soldier as Wadsworth that Hancock, Warren, and Sedgwick should each have asked to have him as a division com-

mander.<sup>1</sup> That he was assigned to Warren was due to the fact that one of the divisions in the Fifth Corps contained the two brigades which Wadsworth had commanded the year before. The Iron Brigade was now once more under Cutler; the Second Brigade was commanded by Brigadier-General Rice, of New York, a soldier of the very finest quality; a third brigade, consisting of Pennsylvania regiments, was under Colonel Roy Stone, who, severely wounded in the desperate fighting at the McPherson farm on the first day at Gettysburg, had now returned to the army. The number of men "present for duty" in the division at the opening of the campaign was 6,921.<sup>2</sup>

The men of the old First Corps, hurt at the change which had obliterated that organization and left of it nothing but a proud memory, welcomed all the more eagerly their old division commander. Dawes, of the Sixth Wisconsin, just back from a furlough during which he had made M. B. G. his wife, wrote to her on April 4: "General James S. Wadsworth is now in command of our division, and we begin at once to feel the old fellow trying in his own level-headed way to ferret out abuses. For instance: 'All officers applying for leave of absence must state the date and length of their last leave.' He is a thorough and able commander." And four days later: "This morning the regiment is to be inspected by Colonel Osborne, Inspector, at General Wadsworth's head-quarters, and every man is busy polishing his gun and brasses and blacking his shoes. Our men will not allow themselves to be surpassed in neatness of appearance."<sup>3</sup> This inspection was a result of Wadsworth's announcement that he would publish in general orders the names of the three regiments in the division

<sup>1</sup> Letter of Hancock, June 25, 1864, published in *New York Evening Post*, September 29, 1864.

<sup>2</sup> From the return of April 30, 1864, in the adjutant-general's office. The total "present for duty" in the Fifth Corps was 25,071.

<sup>3</sup> Service with the 6th Wis., p. 242.

in which the arms and equipment were in the best condition and also the names of the three regiments at the bottom of the list in these respects. The Sixth Wisconsin came first, owing partly to a recent issue of clothing and partly to the fact that the colonel of the regiment had discovered at brigade head-quarters at midnight the order giving the time of inspection of his regiment—eight o'clock the next morning. A preliminary inspection at daylight, after which the men went back to bed again, had done the rest.<sup>1</sup>

Signs that the campaign was about to begin multiplied. Sutlers and camp-followers of every description were ordered to the rear. Baggage was reduced, leaves of absence were forbidden, and drills, often in heavy marching order, were of almost daily occurrence. In all these preparations Wadsworth was mindful of the comfort and well-being of his men. “‘Make out a requisition for extra shoes,’ we heard him say to one of his brigadiers; ‘about one pair of shoes for every two men. I think we can get them of the quartermaster, but I will see to it that at any rate they are got. They will not be heavy to carry, and we shall find the value of them before we get through.’”<sup>2</sup> And then he told the correspondent the story already given of his levy of shoes during the marches of the Gettysburg campaign.

Thus April passed, and with the drying up of the roads—so important an element in every Virginia campaign—the time was reached when marching orders for the army might be expected at any hour. They came on Tuesday, May 3; the Fifth Corps was to start at midnight. Since it was important that the enemy should get no hint of Grant's movement, the lighting of fires, a favorite practice with soldiers breaking camp, was strictly forbidden; three days' rations were to be carried by each man, and fifty rounds of ammunition. Since

<sup>1</sup> Hist. of 150th Pa., p. 205; 6th Wis., p. 245.

<sup>2</sup> Unidentified newspaper clipping.

it was already evening when the order reached Wadsworth's headquarters, the completion of his preparations gave occupation for every moment of his time. And with him, as with many another soldier, one of the last things to be done was the writing of the letters which might be, and which indeed were, for those at home the final word of farewell. Different in tone these were from what he had written a year before at the beginning of the Chancellorsville campaign, showing more plainly how his thoughts dwelt upon the welfare of those he loved, if perchance he should fall. That to his wife was a true soldier's letter, reserved, yet charged with feeling that showed the poles of his life to be home and duty.

*May 3rd., 9 P. M.*

MY DEAR WIFE:—

I have just received your most kind letter of April 30th (Saturday). We have just received marching orders to move at 12 tonight and all is bustle and confusion. Still I withdraw my mind from the scene and the duties of the hour a few moments, my dear wife, to tell you that we are all well (Tick<sup>1</sup> is with me) and in the best spirits. We feel sure of a victory.—I wish I could tell you how much I love you and our dear children, how anxious I am that all should go well with you, that you will all live in affection and kindness, and that none of our dear children will ever do anything to tarnish the good name which we who are here hope to maintain on the battlefield.—Write a kind letter to dear Jimmie if he is not with you, with all the love and affection I can express. Kiss Nancy and Lizzie and believe me, my dear wife, fondly and truly yours,

JAS. S. WADSWORTH.

The region of the Wilderness,<sup>2</sup> into and through which Grant was moving his army and which was destined

<sup>1</sup> Craig was on the staff of Brigadier-General A. T. A. Torbert, commanding the First Division of the cavalry. He distinguished himself throughout his service for gallant conduct in battle, particularly at Cold Harbor and Trevely Station, and was thrice brevetted, his final brevet being that of colonel.

<sup>2</sup> See map facing p. 260.



May 3<sup>d</sup> 4 P.M.

My dear Wife.

I have just  
rec<sup>d</sup> your sweet kind  
letter of April 30<sup>th</sup> (this day)  
We have just rec<sup>d</sup> marching  
orders to move at 12 to  
night & all is bustle and  
confusion - Still I withhold  
my mind from the scene  
& the duties of the hour  
a few moments my dear  
wife to tell you that we  
are all well - (Dick is  
with me) and in the best  
spirit - We feel men  
of a victor - I wish I  
could tell you how much  
I love you & our dear  
children how anxious I  
am that all <sup>should</sup> well & well



with you, that you will  
all live in affection and  
kindness, and that none  
of our dear children will  
ever do anything to tarnish  
the good names which we  
who are here hope to  
maintain in the battle  
field - Write a kind  
letter to dear Minnie  
if he is not with you,  
with all the love and  
affection I can express -  
His love & kiss  
and believe me  
my dear wife fondly  
& truly, Yrs

A. L. Hudson



presently to be the scene of a contest the like of which had not occurred since Hermann destroyed the Roman legions in the forest of Teutoberg,<sup>1</sup> lies immediately south of the Rapidan, between Chancellorsville and Mine Run, an area some twelve miles across from east to west and ten or twelve from north to south. It was covered, then as now, by a dense second growth of scrubby trees, the primeval forests having been cut down to feed the furnaces connected with the mines that Alexander Spotswood, Governor of Virginia in the early years of the eighteenth century, had opened throughout the region. "Thickets of stunted pine, sweet-gum, scrub oak, and cedar,"<sup>2</sup> "a jungle of switch . . . ten or twenty feet high,"<sup>3</sup> are some of the phrases which have been used to characterize this growth; and Milton's "brush with frizzled hair implicit" describes the tangle of underbrush with which the floor of the forest was encumbered.

Through the midst of the forest run the Orange Turnpike and the Orange Plank Road, forming the main lines of travel between Fredericksburg on the east and Orange Court House on the west. Where these are connected by the Brock Road, a north and south cross-road, they are a mile and a half apart; a little farther west the distance between them is nearly twice as great. Another cross-road, the Germanna Plank Road, forms the other leg of a letter X between the two east and west roads, and, extending to the northwest for five miles, crosses the Rapidan at Germanna Ford.

Besides these main roads there is in the forest a maze of cart tracks and cow-paths, threading its ravines and winding around its swamps, in which seep the waters of numerous streams. Here and there are clearings, the most considerable of them, that at Wilderness Tavern in

<sup>1</sup> The Wilderness Campaign from Our Present Point of View, by Major Eben Swift, U. S. A., Report of Am. Hist. Assn. for 1908, I, 246.

<sup>2</sup> General E. M. Law, in Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, IV, 122.

<sup>3</sup> Notes and Recollections of Opening of the Campaign of 1864, McH. Howard, Mass. Mil. Hist. Soc. Papers, IV, 97.

the heart of the forest, being a mile across in either direction. Through this clearing runs the straight and narrow Pike, and where it dips down over rolling slopes to cross Wilderness Run the Germanna Ford Road comes in from the northwest. Other clearings are the Widow Tapp's field and that at Parker's Store on the Orange Plank Road, and, lying between them and the Pike in the direction of the tavern, the high ground of Chewning's Farm. Over this high ground and then down the little valley through which flows Wilderness Run lies a wood road connecting Parker's Store and Wilderness Tavern.

South of the Rapidan and west of the Wilderness beyond Mine Run lay Lee's army.<sup>1</sup> His head-quarters were at Orange Court House, some twenty miles from the Wilderness Tavern, and Longstreet's corps was still farther away to the southwest at Gordonsville and Mechanicsburg. The movement around Lee's right flank upon which Grant had determined as the first step in the campaign of 1864, though more promising than a movement round the left flank, had nevertheless this disadvantage, that the army must first traverse the region of the Wilderness. Since the long train of four thousand wagons was bound in the exigencies of its progress to make the Federal advance slow, there was danger lest Lee, catching wind of his opponent's course, should choose to throw his army across Grant's path by the two roads from Orange Court House. The Army of the Potomac, therefore, at the same time that it was pushing south toward the open country beyond Parker's Store, must be so disposed that it could on short notice face to the west to meet Lee. The calculation of time, based on the Mine Run campaign over the same ground in the preceding November, justified belief that, in the words of Major-General Humphreys, who prepared the

<sup>1</sup> For the places referred to in this paragraph, consult the general map; after this paragraph, use the map facing p. 260.

details of the movement, the Army of the Potomac "might move so far beyond the Rapidan the first day that it would be able to pass out of the Wilderness and turn, or partly turn, the right flank of Lee before a general engagement took place."<sup>1</sup> In other words, Grant might hope on the second day of his march to get to Parker's Store and beyond before Lee advanced within striking distance on the Pike and the Plank Road. "I do not perceive," says General Humphreys, who from his position as chief of staff of the Army of the Potomac speaks with an authority that cannot be gainsaid, "that there is anything to induce the belief that General Grant intended or wished to fight a battle in the Wilderness."<sup>2</sup> But Lee, acting on that precept in Napoleon's Maxims of War,<sup>3</sup> "never to do what the enemy wishes you to do, for this reason alone, that he desires it," here, as at other times during the war, disappointed the calculations of his antagonist; through the failure of the Federal cavalry to remain on the Pike according to Meade's orders,<sup>4</sup> Ewell's swift approach along that road was unknown to Grant, who was thus left too long in fancied security.<sup>5</sup> So the battle was brought on in the middle of the forest, where Lee's men were much more at home than were Grant's, where the disparity between his 61,000 and Grant's 115,000 effectives<sup>6</sup> was minimized, and where the superiority of the Federal artillery counted for nothing.

A battle fought on these terms is one of "brigades and regiments rather than of corps and divisions,"<sup>7</sup> if, indeed, it is not even better characterized in the words of Colonel Theodore Lyman, volunteer aide-de-camp on Meade's staff, as a "scientific bushwhack of 200,000

<sup>1</sup> The Virginia Campaign of 1864-1865, pp. 11, 12.

<sup>2</sup> Va. Campaign, p. 56.

<sup>3</sup> Edition of 1861, p. 58.

<sup>4</sup> 67 W. R., p. 290.

<sup>5</sup> Va. Campaign, p. 22.

<sup>6</sup> Grant's Campaign against Lee, Colonel T. L. Livermore, M. M. H. S. Papers, IV, 416.

<sup>7</sup> General E. M. Law, in Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, IV, 122.

men,"<sup>1</sup> Obviously, in such a contest skill in the art of war counts for less than individual resourcefulness and courage. That courage, too, must be of the kind which can put down sudden fear springing from unknown causes. One of the officers of the Twentieth Massachusetts told Lyman that, though his regiment lost one-fourth of its men, he never saw an enemy. There is nothing strange, then, in the statement of Colonel Swan that "in all this wood fighting our troops seem to have been greatly alarmed whenever the noise of a contest to the right or the left told them that there was fighting in the rear of a prolongation of their own line. Such noises seem to have caused more disturbance than a foe directly in front."<sup>2</sup>

Officers, too, as well as men, felt the spell of the Wilderness and were not at their best. "These generals," says Colonel Thomas L. Livermore, in speaking of the beginning of the battle, "who hesitated to attack were brave and skilful soldiers, but some strange lethargy seems to have possessed them."<sup>3</sup> But these mysteries of the woodland, whatever their effect on others, proved to have no terrors for Wadsworth. The necessity of attacking an unseen antagonist with troops which for the most part he could not see in nowise daunted him, and his valor was as stubborn here as on the open fields of Gettysburg.

In the march which began at midnight of the night of May 3-4, Warren's corps was ordered to proceed from Culpeper to Germanna Ford, and, having crossed the Rapidan, to go on to the Wilderness Tavern, in the open ground about which it was to encamp for the night. Of Warren's four divisions, Wadsworth's, the next to the largest, marched third.

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Professor Theodore Lyman for the privilege of consulting his father's notes of the battle.

<sup>2</sup> The Battle of the Wilderness, M. M. H. S. Papers, IV, 142.

<sup>3</sup> M. M. H. S. Papers, IV, 422.

Through the darkness of the early dawn, along the roads leading to the chosen fords of the river, "could be heard the hum of moving troops and the peculiar rattle of cup and canteen which is heard only in war."<sup>1</sup> When the sun rose with the promise of a warm day every height of land over which the troops took their way gave them glimpses of the vast movement of which they were a part. All the roads were marked by columns of infantry, by wagon trains and artillery; flags dipped and the sunlight sparkled on the flanks of the brass Napoleons. Now and again was heard the sound of distant cheering. Thrilled by the hope of victory which the beginning of the campaign held out to the army, officers and men were responsive to the signs of spring everywhere about them, and Theodore Lyman was not the only soldier who noted that "beyond Stevensburg the road-side was full of violets, and the little leaves of the wood trees were just beginning to unfold, the size of a mouse's ear, perhaps."

By the middle of the morning Wadsworth's division had reached Germanna Ford on the Rapidan and had begun crossing on the pontoon bridges. On the high ground above the south bank were the head-quarters colors of Grant, of Meade, and of Warren, and the young officers of their staffs exchanged friendly greeting with their comrades in the marching columns. Leaving this brilliant group behind them, the sign of the unity of that huge organization to which it was their pride to belong, Wadsworth's men struck into the Wilderness after the two leading divisions of the Fifth Corps.

Though the distance from the ford to the tavern was less than five miles, the monotony of the forest was broken only once or twice by a clearing and a couple of old houses, and the distance seemed interminable. Tokens of the heat and fatigue of the day appeared in the discarded overcoats with which the road-sides were

<sup>1</sup> The Battle of the Wilderness, M. M. H. S. Papers, IV, 119.



strewn. Arrived at last at the tavern, Wadsworth was ordered to encamp his division east of Wilderness Run, the divisions ahead of him being one (Griffin's) to the west on the Pike and the other (Crawford's) to the southwest about the Lacy house, ready to take up the march to Parker's Store the next morning. And here, ringed about by the Wilderness, one of Wadsworth's regiments was brought face to face with reminders of last year's battle, of Stonewall Jackson's overwhelming attack upon the unguarded Federal flank, and of his mortal wound received in the moment of victory. The Second Wisconsin had been sent on picket duty in the direction of Chancellorsville, "and its adjutant, G. M. Woodward, of La Crosse, Wisconsin, says that where he established the line of pickets the ground here and there blazed with wild azaleas, and at first presented no evidence that it had ever been the scene of battle; dismounting, he soon found scattered in every direction the débris of war—knapsacks, belts, bayonets, scabbards, etc. Farther on he saw what appeared to be a long trench about eight feet wide, filled up and mounded, its edges sunken and covered with grass, weeds, and wild flowers. This picket line ran undoubtedly through Stonewall Jackson's field hospital of just a year before, to which he was carried when wounded."<sup>1</sup>

Meade's orders for the next day, May 5, required Warren, starting at five o'clock, to take his corps by the wood road to Parker's Store, and, having reached it, to extend his right to Sedgwick, who was to move up to take the position that Warren had held on the Pike. Hancock, making a long sweep from Chancellorsville, was to take position on Warren's left and to extend his right to connect with Warren. This having been done, the army was to be "held ready to move forward." Flankers and pickets were to be thrown well

<sup>1</sup> Schaff's *Battle of the Wilderness*, p. 97. To this book, as well as to personal help given me by its author, I am greatly indebted.

out and all the troops "held ready to meet the enemy at any moment."<sup>1</sup>

The belief on which these orders were based, that Lee's army was far enough away to the west for this "preliminary position" to be taken on the morning of May 5, was destined not to survive many hours of daylight. On the night of May 4 the head of Ewell's corps had encamped on the Pike only five miles from Wilderness Tavern, while the head of Hill's corps on the Plank Road was within three or four miles of Parker's Store.<sup>2</sup> The two columns which Lee was sending to strike athwart the Federal line of march were thus close at hand.

The proximity of Ewell on the Pike was discovered early on the morning of May 5 by the outposts of Griffin's division. Warren, though sceptical as to the gravity of the situation, told Griffin to get ready to attack at once.<sup>3</sup> Meade, hurrying up, ordered Warren to suspend his march and to attack straightway with his whole force, saying, "If there is to be any fighting this side of Mine Run, let us do it right off."<sup>4</sup> Finally, Grant, when communicated with, ordered an immediate attack;<sup>5</sup> taken by surprise though he was, he proposed to lose not an hour in striking at Lee, whether he had to encounter a whole corps or only a rear-guard.

At five o'clock Crawford's division of Warren's corps had started from about the Lacy house, followed by Wadsworth's; they were making good progress toward Parker's Store when they suddenly heard the sound of skirmishing in the direction of Mine Run. Soon an aide hurried up to Wadsworth with orders from Warren despatched at 7.30: "The movement towards Parker's Store is suspended for the moment. You will halt, face towards Mine Run, and make your connection with Gen-

<sup>1</sup> Meade's orders, May 4, 6 P. M.—(68 W. R., p. 371.)

<sup>2</sup> Va. Camp., p. 23.

<sup>4</sup> Schaff, p. 128.

<sup>3</sup> 68 W. R., p. 416.

<sup>5</sup> 68 W. R., p. 403.

eral Griffin on your right.”<sup>1</sup> Presently Warren himself, accompanied by Lieutenant Schaff, rode up. “Find out what is in there,” he said, pointing to the woods toward the west.<sup>2</sup>

Taking the two batteries (Breck’s First New York and Stewart’s Fourth United States) that were with the division, and the leading brigade, Rice’s, and sending orders to Stone and Cutler, Wadsworth started in the direction indicated by Warren. The batteries followed up a road which had evidently been used for bringing out charcoal and which was now grown up with small brush and full of stumps and rotting logs. A journey through the woods of perhaps a quarter of a mile brought them out on a narrow clearing less than half a mile long, where were situated the buildings of Miss Hagerson’s farm. Wadsworth halted the batteries at the eastern edge of the clearing and directed Stewart, who will be remembered for the execution he did on Scales’s brigade at Gettysburg, to command them both.<sup>3</sup> No task could please the daring Scotchman better than to manage guns in such a remote and hazardous position. The brigade Wadsworth formed in the clearing. At 8.30, less than an hour after receiving Warren’s order, he explained to Griffin, commanding the division on his right, the disposition of his own 6,500 effectives as follows: “I find an opening and tolerable position for artillery about one and one-half miles from Lacy’s house. I am at that point with two batteries and one brigade [Rice]. Have a brigade [Stone] stretched thinly through a piece of very thick woods and one brigade [Cutler] near you.”<sup>4</sup> The left of his line was supported by the Maryland brigade of Robinson’s division.

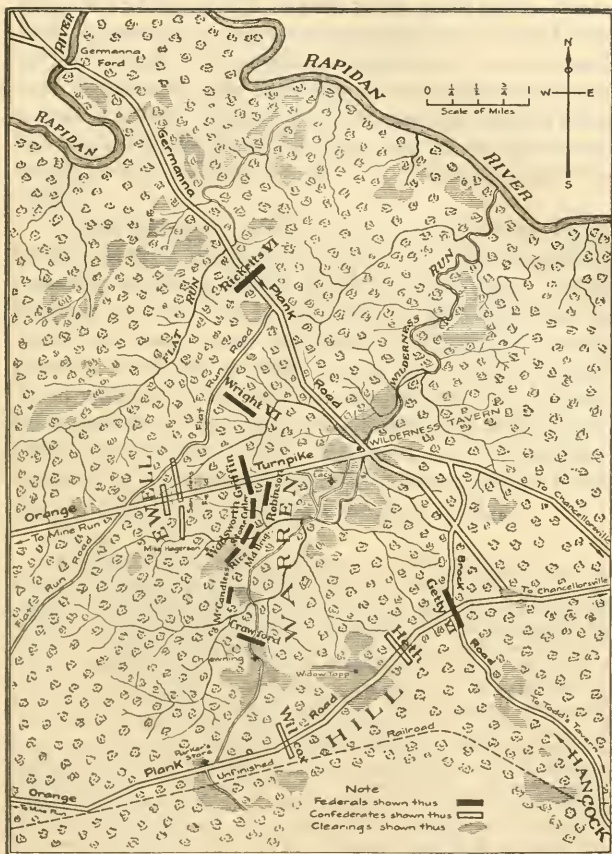
In this position, although by his connection with

<sup>1</sup> 68 W. R., p. 420. A similar order sent to Crawford at the same time bade him connect with Wadsworth on his right.

<sup>2</sup> Schaff, p. 129.

<sup>3</sup> The Cannoneer, pp. 159, 160.

<sup>4</sup> 68 W. R., p. 420.



POSITION OF TROOPS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE BATTLE OF THE WILDERNESS.



MAP OF THE SIERRA NEVADA, SHOWING THE LOCATION OF THE  
MOUNTAIN RANGE

Griffin Wadsworth was well protected on the right, he was not so fortunate in respect to his other flank. Crawford, by reason of exigencies presently to be noted, told off only a part of a brigade (McCandless's) to join hands with Wadsworth, and then only after so much delay that it was of no use. Moreover, Rice's brigade, formed along the length of the Hagerson farm and facing northwest, had its unprotected left flank even advanced toward the enemy.

No advantage, however, was to be gained from Wadsworth's prompt preparations, though a brisk attack was precisely the thing desired by Grant and Meade. In his message sent at 8.24 in response to the notification of Ewell's advance, Grant had said: "If any opportunity presents itself for pitching into a part of Lee's army, do so without giving time for disposition."<sup>1</sup> The faithful execution of this, the new commander's first fighting order to the Army of the Potomac, was the primary essential to the success of the Union arms, yet the battle did not begin till well beyond the hour of noon.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 68 W. R., p. 403.

<sup>2</sup> The blame for the delay rests squarely upon Warren, commanding the Fifth Corps, though the difficulties encountered by his division commanders, Crawford and Griffin, furnished excuses that at the moment seemed all-sufficient. Crawford's division, when the order to halt came, had reached the high ground of Chewning's Farm, only a little over a mile from Parker's Store on the Plank Road. Toward Parker's Store the enemy, Hill's corps, was advancing steadily, though delayed somewhat by a small force of Union cavalry. Failure to occupy these open fields meant the abandoning to the Confederates of the best fighting-ground in the whole region. It meant, too, that Hill could move forward unopposed to the junction of the Brock Road with the Plank Road, in which position he could cut off Hancock's corps from the rest of the army. More than one protest, therefore, Crawford sent back to Warren, but to no purpose. As late as 11.50 Warren sent him a sharp command: "You must connect with General Wadsworth, and cover and protect his left as he advances."—(68 W. R., p. 419.) Besides the delay from this cause, Warren was constantly receiving reports from Griffin of the formidable force that was opposed to him, the difficulty of forming in the woods, and the need of more time to allow Wright of the Sixth Corps to come into position on his right. "The Union generals," says Colonel Thomas L. Livermore in commenting on these remonstrances, "had too often delayed their attacks for everybody to come into line. The chance of inflicting damaging blows before the enemy had con-



Meanwhile, Wadsworth's troops, having thrown up slight intrenchments, were lying at their ease in the woods, full of the cheer of the warm spring morning. The officers of the Sixth Wisconsin, in the second line of the Iron Brigade, lounged under a great oak-tree, chaffing one another as if it were the noon hour of a day's hunting expedition.<sup>1</sup>

At a little before one o'clock the attack began. The orders were to advance due west by the compass, a command impossible of execution even if there had been a compass for every man of them. Schaff's account gives a vivid picture of the kind of thing that happened.

"The troops tried at first to advance in line of battle from the temporary works which had been thrown up while the reconnoissances and preparations were going on; but owing to the character of the woods they soon found that was out of the question, and had to break

centrated and prepared for the attack had too often been thrown away in this manner, and this was not the time to repeat these tactics."—(M. M. H. S. Papers, IV, 420.) Thus the unfortunate corps commander was ground between the upper and the nether millstones. At 10.30 he sent an order to Wadsworth to attack without waiting for Griffin, bidding him at the same time to look out himself for his own left flank—that is, not to rely on Crawford for protection on that side; but the order was suspended, probably by reason of fresh representations from Griffin. "One cannot wonder," remarks Colonel Livermore, "that Grant, waiting for over four hours at the Wilderness Tavern to hear Warren's musketry announce that his orders had been obeyed, should question the spirit of those who were responsible for the delay, every moment of which was impairing the chance for victory which he saw within his grasp."—(*Ibid.*, p. 422.) One cannot help thinking, too, that here was the beginning of the tragedy of Five Forks which darkened the remainder of Warren's days.

This delay of Warren's offered a golden opportunity which Ewell was not slow to seize. He had been cautioned by Lee not to bring on a general engagement, since Longstreet's corps was not yet near enough at hand, but he had sufficient time to get the brigades of his leading divisions into line. Those nearest the Pike on either side were formed near the western edge of the Sanders field; the others were sent into the woods to right and left as they came up. So it was that, when at last, Warren's men moved to the attack, the opposing troops were facing each other in lines that were, roughly speaking, at right angles with the Pike. Only, as has been said, the left flank of Wadsworth's left brigade was extended toward the enemy.

<sup>1</sup> 6th. Wis., p. 259.



by battalions and wings into columns of fours. So by the time they neared the enemy all semblance of line of battle was gone and there were gaps everywhere between regiments and brigades. Regiments that had started in the second line facing west found themselves facing north, deploying ahead of the first line. As an example of the confusion, the Sixth Wisconsin had been formed behind the Seventh Indiana, with orders to follow it at a distance of one hundred yards. By running ahead of his regiment the colonel of the Sixth managed to keep the Seventh in sight till they were close to the front; but when the firing began the Seventh set out at double-quick for the enemy and disappeared in a moment, and the next thing was an outburst of musketry and the enemy were coming in front and marching by both flanks."<sup>1</sup>

Under these difficult circumstances, it was the Iron Brigade with its western woodsmen that made the best progress. At the moment of contact with the enemy they were in advance of the rest of the division on their left and of the nearest brigade (Bartlett's) of Griffin's division on their right. They pushed forward with cheers, and the force opposed to them (Jones's brigade of Johnson's division) gave way. So great was their impetus that with the help of Bartlett's brigade they broke the brigades (Battle's and Doles's of Rodes's division) in the Confederate second line. Three flags and two hundred and eighty-nine prisoners Cutler reported as their prize.<sup>2</sup> But this advance was an isolated one. Griffin's men on the other side of the Pike found that the line opposite them overlapped theirs considerably on the right, and

<sup>1</sup> Schaff's *Battle of the Wilderness*, p. 152. Owing to the absence of distinctive landmarks and the fact that the woods confounded every one's sense of direction, the detailed narratives of individuals and of regiments are exceptionally at variance with each other. For these reasons more than the usual allowance for possible error must be made in connection with statements of the position of troops.

<sup>2</sup> 67 W. R., p. 610.

soon the flank fire from its extreme regiments drove them back in confusion. Bartlett and Cutler were presently assailed by troops from Early's division, which, forming hurriedly and coming on with a wild yell, broke them up and forced them back. Cutler's people did not stop till they reached the open ground of the Lacy plantation; but for all that they were not too demoralized to bring their prisoners with them.

In Wadsworth's centre, meanwhile, some of Stone's regiments had encountered a swamp. Impeded and bewildered in the attempt to accomplish its passage, they were completely unnerved by the discharges of musketry about them. Indeed, it is altogether probable that they and Rice's men fired into each other. At all events, the men nearest to Rice, occupied in extricating themselves each from his own mud-hole or briery tangle, made no resistance worth mentioning. As for Rice's brigade, its misfortunes had begun earlier in the morning, when four whole companies and parts of two others sent out as skirmishers had been captured. Now, as it advanced through a piece of woods particularly dense, its left swung round toward the Pike. When presently it was checked by the fire of an unseen foe, the discovery that the enemy's line overlapped that flank for a considerable distance threw it into complete confusion. As the regiments, disorganized by the flank attack, poured back into the Hagerson clearing, their assailants, Daniel's brigade of Rodes's division, coming close behind them, Stewart recognized the opportunity for which he had been waiting. Realizing that he might be called upon to get out of a tight place in a hurry, he had already sent back toward the Lacy plantation the other battery and the caissons of both, and now with his guns "at fixed prolonge," ready to move without a second's delay, he was in a position to prevent the Confederates from crossing the field. When the canister which he gave them in good measure had driven them back to

the shelter of the woods, he withdrew his battery as rapidly as the holes and stumps in the wood road permitted.<sup>1</sup>

This encounter between Warren and Ewell, which, beginning at 12.50, lasted for about an hour and a half,<sup>2</sup> resulted in the repulse of all the Federal troops engaged. Not only was Grant's plan of a sudden, sharp blow at Lee while he was unprepared frustrated, but the Federal troops had shown themselves less able than the Confederates to cope with the difficulties of forest fighting and more subject to its terrors. The prestige of victory in the first meeting of the two great antagonists was with Lee. In truth, if Warren's men had been pursued, their punishment would unquestionably have been severer. For this immunity Grant had to thank the restraining orders of Lee, who was unwilling to risk more until Longstreet had joined him.

The part taken by Wadsworth himself in the engagement is hard to define. His brigades, stretched out through the woods, were as completely beyond his control as they were beyond his sight, and the stunted pines with their spreading branches practically prohibited communication by mounted aides. Wadsworth's presence, therefore, was of avail only with the troops of Rice's brigade in the Hagerson clearing. Shut off from knowledge of Cutler's success at first, he was cognizant only of the feeble resistance of Stone's regiments to the advance of the Confederates on the right flank of Rice's brigade and then of the disaster on the other flank. With affairs going in this fashion there was noth-

<sup>1</sup> The Cannoneer, p. 159; History of the N. C. Regiments, III, 44. Colonel Wainwright, commanding the artillery brigade of the Fifth Corps, in his report says merely that Stewart's and Breck's batteries "did not get into position at this place," *i. e.*, Hagerson's.—(67 W. R., p. 640.) Stewart's fortune with his guns is in strong contrast to the loss of the section of Winslow's battery which was advanced along the Pike as far as the Sanders field.

<sup>2</sup> According to Colonel Lyman, whose indications of time are unusually precise.—(M. M. H. S. Papers, IV, 167.)

ing for Wadsworth to do but to order a retreat before he was entirely cut off. This was disconcerting enough, but he became still more wrought up when, on getting back to the fields about the Lacy house, he found men of all his brigades emerging in more or less confusion from the woods to the west. Once in the open, to be sure, they halted; they had got their bearings and, more than that, could realize that they were not being pursued. Though the reforming of the regiments was now an easy matter, his vexation at their unaccountable behavior increased, if anything, as he dashed hither and thither. That the men who had endured so steadily all the long day at Gettysburg should now give way on such short provocation was a possibility for which he was totally unprepared. At the moment his philosophy could not compass it, and the chagrin of the failure overcame him completely.

Wadsworth was not the only officer whose temper, severely strained during the long anxious morning, first by the baffling contest with nature and then by the contest with men whom nature seemed to be aiding, now gave way. At the Lacy house, where Warren was, and at Grant's and Meade's head-quarters on the other side of the Pike, many hard words were dealt. Griffin came storming in, so angry that he had been ordered to attack before the Sixth Corps had got into position on his right that his language seemed to Rawlins, Grant's chief of staff, sufficient cause for his arrest. The loss of two guns, which had been advanced along the Pike, was the occasion of much recriminating language. Crawford reported nearly a whole regiment captured.<sup>1</sup> Warren was conscious that the burden of his defeat would

<sup>1</sup> This regiment, the 7th (Reserve) Pennsylvania, numbering 272, was captured by a stray company or two of the 61st Georgia of Gordon's brigade. Both commands were wandering about lost when they suddenly encountered each other, and the quick wit of the Confederate commander enabled him to capture a force greatly outnumbering his own.—(A Soldier's Story of His Regiment (61 Ga.), p. 144, and History of the Penn. Volunteers, I, 729.)

not be eased for him by his superiors. The blame that was in the heart of every one flowed from the tongue unchecked.

Though the work along Warren's line was now done for the day, another battle on the Plank Road to the south was about to begin; and as Wadsworth's fighting spirit was soon to take him thither it is necessary to explain the situation there. Hill's column, led here as at Gettysburg by Heth's division, though delayed somewhat by the Federal cavalry on the Plank Road, had during the forenoon been advancing steadily<sup>1</sup> toward its all-important goal, the point where that road was crossed by the Brock Road. The division behind Heth, Wilcox's, was to protect Hill's left flank by connecting with Ewell's right at the Hagerson farm.

Meade, meanwhile, realizing that if Hill seized the Brock Road, Hancock's corps to the south at Todd's Tavern would be cut off, had hurried to the crossing from the Wilderness clearing Getty's division (three brigades) of Sedgwick's corps, and had ordered Hancock back to the same spot. Getty reached the place in the nick of time, at about noon, and Hancock's men began to arrive at two o'clock.<sup>2</sup> It was in defence of the line of the Brock Road that the severe fighting of the remaining thirty hours of the battle of the Wilderness took place. Severe, indeed, it was beyond almost anything that either army had hitherto known. "There are but one or two square miles upon this continent," remarks Colonel Swan,<sup>3</sup> "that have been more saturated with blood than was the square mile which lay in front of the Brock Road and had the Orange Plank Road as a central avenue, in the two days of the battle of the

<sup>1</sup> At 8 A. M. the head of Hill's column was skirmishing at Parker's Store with Federal cavalry.—(Crawford's report, 68 W. R., p. 418.) Crawford was mistaken in believing that the opposing force was cavalry. At 12.15 the infantry skirmishers had reached within half a mile of the Brock Road.—(Getty's report, 68 W. R., p. 421.)

<sup>2</sup> 67 W. R., p. 350.

<sup>3</sup> M. M. H. S. Papers, IV, 144.

Wilderness. . . . Nearly every square yard had its fill of blood, and on nearly every square yard was Northern and Southern blood intermingled."

This cross-roads is perhaps the most desolate spot in all the desolation of the forest. The brick-red roads are narrow and run at right angles to each other. The jungle comes up close on either side and the traveller can see into it for a distance of barely twenty feet. In the space north of the Plank Road and west of the Brock Road, the presence of swamps and runs adds to the difficulty of the ground. There is no clearing for a mile in any direction.

Wadsworth, as has been said, soon reformed his men and stationed them on the high ground in front of the Lacy house, facing toward the Plank Road. Here Grant and Meade found him when during the afternoon they came over to inspect Warren's position. Grant was anxious to know whether it would not be possible to send a force straight through the woods to strike Hill in the left flank and rear at the same time that Getty and Hancock assailed him in front, and Wadsworth's reply was the instant request that the task be given to him. The bad conduct of part of his command was still rankling within him and he felt as if his own honor were stained; moreover, his men were at hand and well rested and no less eager than he to retrieve before nightfall the disasters of the morning. As the commanding general listened to this energetic plea and got a glimpse of the white-haired soldier's instinct for taking a hand wherever there was a chance to do any fighting, he had an opportunity to revise his opinion concerning the slowness of Warren's generals. Robinson, too, commanding the Second Division of the Fifth Corps, asked to have a part in the movement, and when his second brigade, Baxter's, was added by Grant to Wadsworth's command, accompanied it.

And yet from this undertaking, as from the morn-



ing's attack, the advantage of prompt movement was to be withheld. Where the blame lies cannot now be ascertained, but for an hour after the troops were ready they waited for marching orders. At quarter-past four the sound of Getty's and Hancock's attack, late in beginning from causes similar to those that had delayed the morning attack on the Pike, was borne from the direction of the cross-roads, and as the sun sank lower the chances of getting through a mile and a half of dense woods in time to strike Hill's flank grew less and less. At five o'clock report was made to Warren of a movement of Confederate troops from Chewning's toward Heth, and the order to Wadsworth to go in was either consequent upon this or else coincident with it.<sup>1</sup>

The task which Wadsworth had undertaken was one to test to the uttermost the nerve of a leader. The difficulties of advancing in line through forest swamps and ravines, the spell of foreboding that woods at dusk always weave about every heart, told upon the firmness of the men, and all the while, in the expressive phrase of one regimental historian, "the whole Wilderness roared like fire in a canebrake."<sup>2</sup> It is not strange that when the enemy's skirmish line—Wilcox's men of Hill's corps, placed across their path barely ten minutes before—fired upon them, one brigade, terror-stricken, became utterly demoralized. The men "broke in a disgraceful manner," so says one report in the official records, "on seeing the fire of Baxter's skirmishers in front of them. They were stopped, however, by the exertions of their own officers and Cutler's bayonets behind them."<sup>3</sup>

The firing thus begun spread from one regiment to another, and soon in Wadsworth's command there was a veritable riot of musketry. Volley after volley was discharged, sometimes at the retreating skirmish line, some-

<sup>1</sup> Va. Campaign, p. 29. This is the time noted by E. B. Washburne, who was at Grant's head-quarters.

<sup>2</sup> Hist. N. C. Regiments, II, 665.

<sup>3</sup> 67 W. R., p. 615



times at stray commands wandering about hopelessly lost, sometimes at no enemy at all. So tremendous and so prolonged was the roar that Grant at head-quarters imagined Wadsworth to be in a contest with a forestful of Confederates, handsomely cleaning them out and making connection with Hancock on the Plank Road. At the bivouac fire that evening he and Rawlins were full of rejoicing at Wadsworth's success and left unsaid no word of praise for his promptness, courage, and patriotism. E. B. Washburne, member of Congress from Illinois, who, as Grant's friend, was accompanying the army, could add much concerning what he had known of Wadsworth in Washington.<sup>1</sup>

The reality of this "success," however, was ironically different and was for Wadsworth the final stroke in the day's disasters. The commander of the brigade already mentioned, with hilariousness well stimulated, continued to make the forest ring with his discharges, and when Wadsworth sent an aide to bid him cease firing and keep quiet, ordered cheers for his native State. A second order to report at once to Wadsworth he refused to obey.<sup>2</sup> The next morning he had disappeared altogether; his service to the Union cause was at an end.

As long as there was a glimmer of light Wadsworth's line advanced, pushing Wilcox's skirmishers back toward the Plank Road. When the division finally came to a halt the line was about half or three-quarters of a mile from the road and nearly parallel to it. It had, however, moved more to the left than was at first intended, the magnet of Hill's and Hancock's contest proving an irresistible attraction. The right of the line was thus not far from the northeast corner of the Widow Tapp's clearing, on the western edge of which were Lee's and Hill's head-quarters; the left was in the thick woods

<sup>1</sup> E. B. Washburne to C. F. Wadsworth, June 2, 1865.

<sup>2</sup> Information furnished by Earl M. Rogers, who was on Wadsworth's staff.

toward Hancock's line, but not connecting with it. Though as yet Wadsworth had brought no aid to Hancock, and though, by reason of his boisterous advance, a surprise was now out of the question, yet he was in position to take part at once in the hard fighting which was sure to begin early the next day. Late at night, when the regiments had all reported, he sent an aide, Captain Monteith, back to Warren to get the next day's orders and also to bring up a supply of ammunition, much needed after the recent expenditure.

The many records that have been made of the hours passed in this nightmare of a place show how completely the mystery of the forest had penetrated the living beings who had invaded its depths, working upon them in darkness even more compellingly than in daylight. That portion of Wadsworth's command near the Tapp field was so close to the enemy that men venturing out from either side in search of water found themselves caught within the lines of their opponents. Now and then a soldier, as merciful as he was daring, crept out to give a drink from his canteen to a wounded enemy whose cries mingled with the calls of the whippoorwills. Near where the men of the Sixth Wisconsin lay on their arms a dying Confederate soldier moaned repeatedly: "My God! why hast thou forsaken me?"<sup>1</sup>

The fortunes of the battle about to be renewed were dependent for both sides on the arrival of reinforcements. Burnside's corps of approximately 17,000 men, which was due to be on hand early in the morning, was to attack Hill on the left flank and rear in the Chewning fields, the high open ground from which Crawford had been withdrawn the morning before. This attack, if successful, would cut off Ewell from Hill. But Burnside had, as Lyman said of him, a "genius of slowness"; while on the Confederate side, where the need was far more exigent, the hope of help lay in Longstreet,

<sup>1</sup> 6th Wisconsin, p. 261.

Lee's strength and reliance. In the conflict of the afternoon of May 5—"a butchery pure and simple . . . unrelieved by any of the arts of war in which the exercise of military skill and tact robs the hour of some of its horrors"<sup>1</sup>—Hill's two divisions, amounting to 15,000 men, had been terribly weakened, and when night brought the contest to an end he allowed his battered brigades to stay where darkness found them, their intrenchments not continuous and their lines unrectified. Thus insecure and anxious, he and Lee at their head-quarters in the Tapp field prayed that dawn might not come before they should be reinforced. Longstreet, in truth, with his 10,000 men, was not failing them. Having rested his troops after a march of twenty-three miles, he had started half an hour after midnight<sup>2</sup> to complete the remaining ten or eleven miles to the battle-field; Anderson's division of Hill's corps, 7,000 by count, had about the same distance left to accomplish on the Plank Road.

At three o'clock Captain Monteith returned to Wadsworth, bringing the supply of ammunition and the orders from Warren, which were to attack at five o'clock simultaneously with Hancock: "Set your line of battle on a line northeast and southwest, and march directly southeast on the flank of the enemy in front of General Hancock."<sup>3</sup> Before the ammunition could be distributed, dawn had already come.<sup>4</sup> It was Friday, May 6, the most critical day in the history of the Republic, and for Wadsworth the last day of conscious life.

At the earliest gleam of light the men were roused, and then, having snatched a cold bite and formed in silence, they waited the sound of the signal gun from Hancock's head-quarters at the cross-roads. When its

<sup>1</sup> History of the N. C. Regiments, III, 75.

<sup>2</sup> 67 W. R., p. 1054.

<sup>3</sup> 68 W. R., p. 458. The hour for the attack as given in the despatch was 4.30. It was later changed by Grant's order to five o'clock.

<sup>4</sup> War papers, Wisconsin Commandery of the Loyal Legion, I, 413.

boom broke the stillness they pushed resolutely through the thickets and swamps. As they drew near the Plank Road the left naturally swung round so as to advance in line with Getty's and Birney's divisions which were coming from the Brock Road. The two bodies thus meeting became somewhat crowded together, but lost none of their energy.<sup>1</sup> They quickly brushed the Confederates out of their irregular breastworks and drove them down the road and through the forest toward and into the Tapp field, capturing many prisoners.<sup>2</sup> Hancock, at the cross-roads, as he received one message after another of success, was radiant. "Tell General Meade," he cried to Lyman, "we are driving them most beautifully. Birney has gone in and is cleaning them out beautifully." Well might he seize this chance

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Lyman's comment on this advance affords another illustration—if another be needed—of the difficulties attending the study of the battle of the Wilderness. "Concerning this fight on the Plank Road, there has been the greatest discussion between Webb's brigade, Getty's division, and the divisions of Birney and of Wadsworth, especially the two latter. Wadsworth's people, and Cope, of General Warren's staff, state that they drove back the rebels and got a footing on the Plank Road (attacking the rebel left in that part of the field) and that one brigade swept the whole front of the Second Corps and came out on the other side, while the Second Corps were lying behind breastworks doing nothing! Birney's people, *per contra*, say that Wadsworth's attack amounted to nothing and he was driven back, though personally he came on the Plank Road and interfered with the order of battle, while they did all the successful fighting! The two accounts are entirely unreconcilable, but are not astonishing in a desperate fight in a thick cover, where no one can see a hundred feet and every one is liable to get turned round."

<sup>2</sup> Rice's brigade on Wadsworth's right fared less fortunately. As it attempted to push into the Tapp field it was stopped by a battery posted in the northeast corner of the clearing. Rice, a brave and resourceful soldier, in the hope of surprising the battery, sent two regiments through the woods to the right, with orders to take it with the bayonet. The movement was discovered, however, in time for it to limber up and retreat to the other side of the clearing, where with a fierce fire of shrapnel it drove off the detachment and held Rice in check.—(67 W. R., p. 623.)

Four days later, at Spotsylvania, Rice was mortally wounded. "After having his leg amputated he was asked by the attending physician which way he desired to be turned that he might rest more easy. He replied: 'Turn me with my face to the enemy.' These were his last words, and indicated the true character of the man, the soldier, and the patriot."—(67 W. R., 625, report of Colonel J. W. Hofmann.)

to rejoice; it proved the one instant of triumph in all that fatal day.

For the Confederates the situation was desperate. If they could not maintain themselves in the clearing, their chance of dividing Grant's army was gone once for all. In the life of Lee it was one of those supreme moments when the soldier's being, with a degree of power rarely attained, must seek to infuse its will into thousands of men whose wills have gone nerveless at the bidding of mob terror and despair. That force of his must flow everywhere, imparting the cheer and certainty of present help—for Longstreet's two divisions, commanded by Field and Kershaw, were advancing in parallel columns along the Plank Road at as near a double-quick as the weary men could attain. And so the gray-haired general, mounted on Traveller, a figure hardly less historic than Lee himself, radiating ardor of battle in the moment of defeat, seems, in the picture that one forms of that forlorn field with its small huddle of shanties and its withered fruit trees, to be indeed omnipresent. But in this crisis the summons of Lee, at other times all-compelling in its inspiration, proved of little avail. On the southern edge of the field Birney's left had advanced so far that its fire came in the rear of the Confederate batteries,<sup>1</sup> the guns of which now brought no sense of strength to the dispirited masses of men in gray who, as one brigade after another had been rolled up, refused to rally and did not stop even when they reached the shelter of the woods. "My God! General McGowan," exclaimed Lee, "is this splendid brigade of yours running like a flock of geese?"<sup>2</sup>

By six o'clock the head of Longstreet's column had reached the field. His first brigades got into position just in time to arrest the career of Birney's troops, and when Gregg's Texas brigade, the fourth to arrive, came up and formed behind the guns, its duty was to assail

<sup>1</sup> Va. Campaign, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Schaff, p. 249.

the woods north of the Plank Road, where Wadsworth's men had been momentarily checked by the artillery. Lee, the need of success his one thought, rode along-side the Texans as they were about to start, and declared that he himself would lead them. To their cries of "Go back, General Lee, go back," and "We won't go on unless you go back,"<sup>1</sup> he paid no heed, till a man stepped from the ranks and, seizing Traveller's bridle, turned the horse about. "The fine eye of Lee," says one of the many Confederate accounts of this stirring incident, "must often have glistened with something better than a conqueror's pride whenever he recalled the cry with which that veteran rank and file sent him to the rear and themselves to the front."<sup>2</sup>

It was a brigade thus sped to the charge that Wadsworth and his men, themselves in far from good order, were destined to meet. The wide wheel that they had made to advance westward, the intermingling with the troops of Hancock's corps, and finally the struggle through the morass which lay across their path had cut up their formation into small separate masses; but their ardor was undiminished. For all their disorder they had caught a vision of victory such as the Army of the Potomac had not known for many a long month. The shock when their first line met the Texans was appalling. "The Federals," writes the Confederate general, E. M. Law, "were advancing through the pines with apparently resistless force, when Gregg's eight hundred Texans, regardless of numbers, flanks, or supports, dashed directly upon them. There was a terrific crash, mingled with wild yells, which settled down into a steady roar of musketry. In less than ten minutes one-half of

<sup>1</sup> Address of Colonel C. S. Venable before the Virginia Division of the Army of Northern Virginia, October 30, 1873, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Address of Leigh Robinson before the Virginia Division of the Army of Northern Virginia, November 1, 1877, p. 75. Near this spot on the Plank Road now stands a low stone bearing the date and the words: "'Lee to the rear,' cried the Texans."



that devoted eight hundred were lying upon the field, dead or wounded; but they had delivered a staggering blow and broken the force of the Federal advance.”<sup>1</sup>

Wadsworth, who was on the Plank Road, had his horse shot under him; the division, sheltered in the woods, stood firm. The charge of another brigade, Benning's Georgians, no less furious than that of the Texans, it repulsed also, inflicting hardly less damage; but the third assault, made by Law's brigade, it could not withstand. The fierceness of this contest is vividly portrayed in the narrative of Sergeant Frey, of the One Hundred and Fiftieth Pennsylvania of Stone's brigade. Though it has the conventional characteristics of "battle pieces" in regimental histories, the note of admiration for Wadsworth's courage and kindness gives it individuality and point.

"Now is our turn. As the men composing our first and second lines take refuge in our rear, we move to the front, and General Wadsworth riding up to our regiment says: 'Give it to them, Bucktails!' We pour in one close, deadly volley, and they stagger under the terrible fire. The general shouts: 'Boys, you are driving them; charge!' Our brigade, now the front, charges fiercely, driving them back some distance; but a fresh line comes to their support, fires a volley in our very faces, and sends us back over the ground we had just gained, charging us in return. A new line comes to our aid, pours its fire upon the opposing ranks, compelling them to give way; and again we charge over the same ground, only to be driven back in turn on our reserves, as reinforcements come to the help of the enemy. The battle now becomes close and bloody. Charges and counter-charges are made in quick succession. Five times we traverse the same ground, led by General Wadsworth who sits on his horse with hat in hand, bringing it down on the pommel of his saddle with every bound as he rides at

<sup>1</sup> Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, IV, 125.



the head of the column. Then, as the bullets strike among his men like hail and they begin to recoil, he rides slowly back in their midst, speaking kindly to them, with ever a smile on his pleasant countenance which shows no concern for the storm of lead and iron raging around him.”<sup>1</sup>

“Wadsworth has been slowly pushed back,” reported Captain Cope of Warren’s staff at 7.40, “but is contesting every inch of ground.”<sup>2</sup> At length, however, the Confederate advance against Birney south of the Plank Road prospered; the force opposed to Wadsworth succeeded in pushing his regiments farther and farther into the deep woods and across the swampy ground over which they had so recently won their way. Retreating under these circumstances, the division lost all coherence and for a time was scattered in fragments through the forest. Fortunately, however, the Confederates could not immediately follow up their advantage, and Wadsworth, with the aid of General Rice and of Rogers and Monteith of his own staff, succeeded in bringing his force into some sort of order.

The position of the Union troops after Longstreet’s attack, though difficult to ascertain with exactness, is perhaps best set forth by Atkinson. “Getty had been crowded, during the first advance, to the south side of the road, and all troops that had been engaged were being rallied and reformed in close order, so that a gap had opened immediately on the right of the Plank Road between the troops that had been fighting under Birney against Kershaw and those that had engaged Field’s division near Tapp’s along with the Fifth Corps under Wadsworth.”<sup>3</sup> Into this gap at about seven o’clock advanced the brigade of Brigadier-General Alexander S. Webb, the body that at Gettysburg had borne the brunt of Pickett’s charge. Ordered by Birney to deploy on the Plank Road

<sup>1</sup> 150 Penn. Volunteers, pp. 215, 216.

<sup>2</sup> 68 W. R., p. 458.

<sup>3</sup> Grant’s Campaigns of 1864 and 1865, pp. 180, 181.

and to go forward to replace Getty, Webb suddenly met the enemy. An appalling crash marked the beginning of the encounter, and the prolonged and heavy firing indicated the severity of the struggle.

Following up this attack,<sup>1</sup> the enemy assailed Wadsworth's right, where Cutler was. So violent was the onset that Cutler was driven back in the direction of the Wilderness clearing, from which he had come the night before, and completely separated from the rest of the division. The irruption of some twelve hundred of his men from the woods into the open space, together with his report of the death of Wadsworth, heavy losses, and the close approach of the Confederate skirmishers,<sup>2</sup> spread alarm at the army head-quarters; Grant rode off in haste to consult with Hancock, while the batteries on the high ground of the clearing stood ready to open on the enemy supposed to be pursuing Cutler.

During the course of the attack in which Webb and Cutler received such severe handling, an aide brought to Wadsworth a message summoning him to Hancock's head-quarters; arrived there, he was informed of Meade's despatch placing him under Hancock's orders and of the movement of Burnside by way of Chewning's<sup>3</sup> toward Parker's Store. Hancock now gave Wadsworth

<sup>1</sup> At about eight o'clock, see Schaff's *Battle of the Wilderness*, p. 235, and his despatch in 68 W. R., p. 420.

<sup>2</sup> 68 W. R., pp. 451, 459, 460. On the next day Cutler wrote to Warren, in explanation of his retreat, as follows (68 W. R., p. 506): "To prevent any misapprehension as to why I came out of the woods yesterday morning (*sic*). When they broke the men started back on the route we went in. I and all my staff commenced rallying them, but they were within half a mile of here before I got anything like order restored. I despatched two staff-officers to find General Wadsworth and take his orders; they both ran into the rebel skirmishers. I at the same time saw the division flag with horsemen and men rallying around it, and moved to it, supposing it was division head-quarters. I moved to it and found only two of his aides with his orderlies. I immediately went to your head-quarters for instructions. I could have moved the men I had rallied to the Plank Road, and should have done so but for the above-stated facts. I was very much mortified at finding myself separated from the column, and feared that there might be some misapprehension about it."

<sup>3</sup> 68 W. R., p. 441.

Ward's and Webb's brigades of his own corps and a brigade (Carruth's) belonging to one of Burnside's divisions which was coming to Hancock's assistance along the Brock Road; with these and the remnants of his own brigades, Wadsworth was to push forward on the right of the Plank Road, driving off the enemy in front of Webb and, if possible, reaching out a hand to Burnside's divisions at Chewning's.<sup>1</sup>

Thus authorized and inspired by Hancock—"bully Hancock," as Meade delighted to call him—Wadsworth returned to his command, pressing through the crowd of wounded men whose blood was staining the red soil of the roadway. At the front, in spite of the firing, matters were at a stand-still. Most of the regiments of Webb's brigade were screened by a dense thicket of saplings; at the road he had stationed the Twentieth Massachusetts, a small but gallant regiment with a gallant commander, Major Henry L. Abbott, ordering him to hold it at all costs. Opposite them, across a slight depression in the road which was continued on the right by the space of swampy ground already mentioned, lay the enemy, protected in their turn by thickets and, at the road, by a row of logs. The distance between the two lines was not more than twenty or thirty yards.<sup>2</sup> Farther to the right, Webb's line was considerably bent back. On such ground, as Wadsworth had already learned from the events of the early morning, no movement of a considerable body of troops could be successfully conducted against a force so resolute and elated as was now there to meet them; the only hope was

<sup>1</sup> At this time all the information obtained from prisoners and deserters went to prove that Longstreet was directly in Hancock's front. It was not till nine o'clock and after that Hancock received the false reports of Longstreet's approach on his left flank which paralyzed his activity for the rest of the forenoon.—(See Major Mitchell's addenda to Hancock's report, 67 W. R., p. 352, and the report of General Brooke, 67 W. R., p. 407, whose brigade was sent to strengthen the left.)

<sup>2</sup> Lyman's description of the ground at the time of a visit there in April, 1866, quoted in Va. Campaign, p. 55.

to charge down the road, where the open space enabled a command to see and to follow its leader, in the hope, after repeated trials, of breaking the enemy's line. The hope was a forlorn one, but, in view of the peril of further Confederate success, what the occasion required was not skill but naked courage; Wadsworth, in following his instinct to lead in person, did the thing that was right and necessary. "In the two days of desperate fighting that followed our crossing the Rapidan," wrote Humphreys of him,<sup>1</sup> "he was conspicuous *beyond all others* for his gallantry, prompter than all others in leading his troops again and again into action. In all these combats he literally led his men, who, inspired by his heroic bearing, continually renewed the contest, which but for him they would have yielded."

Thus it was that, riding forward and coming upon the Twentieth Massachusetts, Wadsworth called out to Abbott, "Cannot you do something here?" When Abbott showed hesitation in leaving the post to which Webb had assigned him, Wadsworth leaped his horse over the slight barrier of logs behind which the men were lying, and of course Abbott and his men followed. The terrific fire which instantly assailed them it was impossible to stand against, and the attempt had to be abandoned. Abbott ordered the men to lie down, while he walked back and forth before the line. It was not long before he fell, mortally wounded. As for Wadsworth, though his horse was killed—the second he had lost that morning—he himself was unhurt.

Presently, when Carruth's brigade came up to his support, Wadsworth, with the Fifty-seventh Massachusetts, a brand-new regiment commanded by that brilliant young soldier Frank Bartlett, made another attempt to break the Confederate line. The image of Wadsworth stamped upon these men of the Fifty-seventh, now coming under fire for the first time, shows how that power

<sup>1</sup>To Mrs. J. S. Wadsworth, September 3, 1864.

of leadership which he had been a whole lifetime in building up was, at this supreme moment of his life, the very elemental force of his being. It prevailed, "even to drawing men around him who had never seen or scarcely heard of him before, holding them almost in the jaws of death and impressing them with his own lofty spirit of loyalty which rose above all fear of danger."<sup>1</sup> With such inspiration the men pressed forward to the attack and lost two hundred and fifty-two men in killed and wounded, but the Confederate line proved unyielding and the assailants were forced to fall back. Not long afterward an order came from Hancock to desist from further attacks.<sup>2</sup> Word had reached him that Longstreet was not in his front but was threatening his extreme left, and on account of this report, mistaken as it was soon disastrously proved to be, troops were withdrawn from the Plank Road and hurried thither.

For Wadsworth and his hard-fought men the respite was welcome. Of the five thousand with whom he had set out on the preceding afternoon, less than two thousand remained;<sup>3</sup> he himself was exhausted. For the last three nights he had had little or no sleep, and for two days his sustenance had been coffee, hard bread, and pork. Since his snatch of breakfast at daylight he had been through five hours of the most frightfully severe work that man is ever called upon to do. To Monteith, who was alone with him for a time, he confessed that he was so utterly worn out as to be unfit to command. Indeed, he "felt that he ought in justice to himself and his men to turn the command over to General Cutler."<sup>4</sup> But Cutler and his brigade were far beyond reach. Before long Wadsworth's orderly appeared and furnished him something to eat, which he shared with his aides. During the

<sup>1</sup> Hist. of the 57th Mass., p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Letter of Craig W. Wadsworth, in the Wadsworth Memorial Address, by L. F. Allen, Jr., p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> 68 W. R., pp. 441, 442.

<sup>4</sup> War Papers of the Wisconsin Commandery of the Loyal Legion, I, 414.

lull, too, his heart was gladdened by the sight of Craig, who had obtained permission to come from Chancellorsville, where Torbert's cavalry was guarding the trains, to stay with his father for an hour or so. Seeing the general's fatigue and shocked to learn of the way in which he had been exposing his life, Craig pleaded with him to be less reckless. Wadsworth's only answer, says Rogers, was to use his soldier's authority and to order Craig back to Torbert's command. Ill at ease, the son departed, and the father turned to his duty and his fate.

The morning was hot and still, the woods were thick with low-hanging smoke, here and there fires smouldered in the underbrush. The continued quiet of the enemy was ominous. It must mean that the storm was about to break. But where? Wadsworth despatched Monteith to caution his right, still unprotected, for Burnside was nowhere near connecting with it, and sent orders to the commanders along the line to fight hard and hold their ground. The master-stroke of the great battle—the counterpart of Stonewall Jackson's surprise flank attack through the woods at Chancellorsville—was about to be dealt.

All that Wadsworth ever knew of the catastrophe is soon told. Suddenly, a little distance at his left and extending well to his rear, the last quarter from which attack might be expected, came the sound of the Rebel "yai-yai-yai-yai," followed by sharp volleys in rapid succession. He sprang to his horse; every one about him was alert to meet the crisis. Near at hand he found General Webb and sent him across the road to look out for the regiments there. Then he seized upon the Thirty-seventh Massachusetts, of Eustis's brigade, which was coming from the direction of the cross-roads,<sup>1</sup> and or-

<sup>1</sup> It had been sent to the extreme left when Longstreet was supposed to be threatening that flank and was now coming back, Hancock's apprehensions of danger there having been somewhat relieved.



dered it forward along the road to stay the advance of the enemy from that quarter. Thus he hoped to check the Confederate approach sufficiently for him to wheel his own line around so that it should be parallel to the road and in position to stop the flank attack.

Making a sweep with his arm from right to left to indicate to his regiments a left half-wheel, he himself went on to charge with the Thirty-seventh, which, under its resolute commander, Colonel Oliver Edwards, broke the enemy's first line and struck its second. Wadsworth, seeing the deadly fire with which the regiment was encompassed on three sides, ordered Edwards to face his men by the rear rank and fight his way back, saying, "You have done all I expected a brigade to do."<sup>1</sup> Then he dashed back to his own line to get it into position while there was yet time, for the broken squads of men emerging from the woods on the south side of the road and streaming to the rear and the renewing tumult of musketry showed that the storm of war from that direction was driving swiftly toward him. Indeed, the two clouds, meeting, were to burst directly upon Wadsworth and his command. Nearer and nearer they came, as inexorable in their steady approach as if they were a force of nature. In the face of disaster thus closing in, every second was an agony, a struggle like that of a man trying to stay single-handed the doom of flood or fire.

Suddenly, as Wadsworth was helping to wheel his fragmentary line round to the road, a crash came right athwart its path. Perrin's Alabama brigade, which had been lying on the ground, seeing the opportunity of assailing his flank, had risen and discharged a volley at close quarters. The Pennsylvania troops which on Seminary Hill at Gettysburg had resisted the enemy so long and valiantly before yielding now broke at the first fire and fled in confusion. Wadsworth's horse, however, kept on, and it was not till he was within

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Edwards's Recollections, MS.



twenty or thirty feet of his opponents that he could control it. Then, as he turned to follow his men, he was struck by a shot in the back of the head. Rogers, riding by his side, was spattered with his blood. Wadsworth fell, and the enemy pressed on in triumph over his unconscious body.<sup>1</sup>

To Wadsworth, left dying in the hands of the enemy—a fate the thought of which rarely failed to touch a soldier with dread—was granted one more opportunity of serving his country, for the impression made upon those who came into the silent presence of this Northern gentleman, found mortally wounded where the battle had raged fiercest, was profound and lasting.

<sup>1</sup> Longstreet's flank attack was made possible by the fact that Hancock's centre and right, under Birney and Wadsworth, were considerably in advance of the Brock Road, whereas his left, under Gibbon, was along that road, being kept there because it was supposed that Longstreet was advancing by the Catharpin Road, which lay to the south of the Plank Road. (See general map.) A reconnoissance, made by a member of Lee's staff, revealed the lack of connection between the two parts of Hancock's line and also an easy method of approach by way of the unfinished railroad lying just south of the Plank Road, this railroad being absolutely unguarded by the Federals. Four Confederate brigades advanced along the railroad grading, formed in line facing north, and struck the unprotected flank without warning. At the signal of their attack, an advance was made by the Confederate troops along the Plank Road. Longstreet and his staff, riding with this force, were fired upon by a Virginia regiment of the flanking body which mistook them for Federals. The commander whose brigade he was accompanying, General Micah Jenkins, was killed, and Longstreet was severely—at the moment it was thought mortally—wounded. The delay caused by this disaster lost the Confederates the cross-roads, the key of the battle on the Plank Road, for when at last they were ready to attack the breastworks on the Brock Road at 4.15 Hancock's troops had rallied and were able to repel them successfully. This ended the fighting on this part of the field. The final engagement occurred just before sunset, when the right flank of the Union army was driven in, with considerable loss in prisoners.

On May 7 both armies lay behind their intrenchments. The result of the two days' fighting was a drawn battle. But Lee knew that henceforth he was to face an antagonist of far different mettle from those that he had formerly known. And Grant, acknowledging that at last he had met his match, but undaunted in courage, with that iron will which was his genius, bade Meade issue orders for an advance by the left to Spotsylvania Court House. On May 7, at nightfall, the army began the forward movement which ended only when it reached the defences of Petersburg on June 16.

The Confederates remained in possession of the ground where he fell, and soon, after the fashion of war when the battle line has swept onward, his sword, watch, field-glasses, and map were taken from him, the two latter coming into the possession of Lieutenant-Colonel Sorrel, Longstreet's brilliant young staff-officer, who had conducted the flank movement through the woods.<sup>1</sup> Presently, Colonel Charles Marshall, a Baltimorean on Lee's staff, being sent into the woods on the right of the road with an order concerning the advance that Lee was preparing to make, heard that a Federal general officer was lying mortally wounded not far away. "I proceeded to the spot," he wrote<sup>2</sup> later, "and found General Wadsworth, whom I knew by a piece of paper which was pinned to his coat with his name on it. . . . I found him lying on his back, his head supported by something which I do not now remember, and over him was extended a shelter tent, about three feet from the ground, the two corners at his head being attached to boughs of trees, I think, the other two and the sides being supported by muskets. His appearance was perfectly natural, and his left hand grasped the stock of one of the supporting muskets near the guard. His fingers played with the trigger, and occasionally he would push the piece from him as far as he could reach, still grasping it in his hand. Supposing that he might wish to send some message to his family, I addressed him and tendered my services. I found, however, that he paid no attention to me, and upon further effort to communicate with him discovered that he was unconscious of what was passing around him. I should not have supposed that such was the case from the expression of his face, which

<sup>1</sup> The watch was recovered by the Wadsworth family soon after the war; the other articles have recently been restored to Mr. James W. Wadsworth through the good offices of Southern members of Congress.

<sup>2</sup> From a letter of Colonel Charles Marshall to a member of the Wadsworth family, November 29, 1865.

was perfectly calm and natural, the eye indicating consciousness and intelligence."

During the afternoon Wadsworth was taken to one of the Confederate field hospitals on the Plank Road, a few miles in the rear of the lines. Here, after the surgeons had examined the wound and found it to be fatal, it was his fortune to be watched over by a wounded Union officer, Captain Z. Boylston Adams, of the Fifty-sixth Massachusetts of Carruth's brigade. Captured in the woods not far from where Wadsworth fell, Adams had been taken to the same Confederate hospital, and on the next morning had been chloroformed and operated on for a broken leg. Adams, himself a young surgeon, in the story which he has told of his watch over the dying soldier, reveals how strangely mingled are tenderness and brutality in that scourge of civilization which we call war.

When I recovered consciousness I found myself lying on the ground beneath a tent fly, and at my side a stretcher on which lay the form of a Union general officer, as shown by his shoulder star. His face was familiar. Raising myself upon my elbow I spoke to him, but he made no reply. I looked closely at him and recognized the man who rode up to us on the Plank Road the day before, when my brigade was put into the battle as already described. He was rather tall, an eminently handsome man of commanding presence, but showing gentle breeding. I lifted his eyelids, but there was "no speculation in those eyes." I felt his pulse, which was going regularly. His breathing was a little labored. There was no expression of pain, but occasionally a deep sigh. His noble features were calm and natural, except that his mouth was drawn down at the left side.<sup>1</sup> His right arm was evidently paralyzed, which indicated that the injury was to the left brain. Examining further, I found that a musket ball had entered

<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, this slight distortion of General Wadsworth's mouth, which shows in some of his photographs, was a paralysis caused when he was a young man by driving from Rochester to Geneseo in a furious snow-storm.

the top of his head a little to the left of the median line. In his left hand, which lay quietly upon the breast of his buttoned coat, he held a scrap of paper on which was written, "General James S. Wadsworth." . . .

Meanwhile the rebel officers thronged the little fly and crowded around, curious to see the dying man whose name and fame had reached their ears. Numberless questions were put to me.

"Do you mean to say that this is James S. Wadsworth, of New York, the proprietor of vast estates in the Genesee Valley, the candidate for governor in 1862?" etc.

I remarked one very singular fact. He lay apparently totally unconscious, but whenever, as was not infrequent, some of the curious ones took the paper to read the name upon it, he would frown and show restlessness, and his hand moved to and fro as if in search of something, until the paper was put into his fingers, when he would grasp it and lay his hand quietly upon his breast. I frequently heard the rebels say, "I'd never believe that they had such men as that in their army." Late in the afternoon a party came in with one vain young fellow much bedizened with stars and buttons and gold lace, and clearly under the influence of liquor. Unmindful of the impress of dignity and nobility of character upon the features of the dying man, he swore at me and called me a liar for saying that this was James S. Wadsworth, declaring that he knew that our officers were crazy abolitionists, mercenaries, low politicians, hirelings from foreign armies, etc. . . .

The surgeons came Saturday night and examined General Wadsworth's wound, removing a piece of the skull and then probing for the ball (the latter struck me as bad surgery). One remarkable thing about the case was that the ball had entered near the top of the head, had gone forward, and was lodged in the anterior lobe of the left side of the brain. Occasionally he heaved a deep sigh, but otherwise lay in calm slumber.<sup>1</sup>

Still another man was near Wadsworth in these last hours, giving his care not merely from the instinct to

<sup>1</sup> In the Wilderness, Civil War Papers, Massachusetts Commandery of the Loyal Legion, II, 389-392.

serve the dying which humanizes all of us, but also from a deep sense of personal gratitude.<sup>1</sup>

After dark [continues Adams] on the evening of the 7th of May (the day after the battle) a Virginian, not a soldier, came up to the back of the fly and asked me about the dying general. Was it really General Wadsworth? etc. He said, "My name is Patrick McCracken and I have a little farm a few miles out. I have heard that General Wadsworth is here wounded, and I want to do something for him." He then related how the general had saved him from long imprisonment at the time Wadsworth was in command of the city of Washington. He, McCracken, was arrested and confined in the Old Capitol Prison as a rebel spy and had been released by the general's order on the representation that his family in the Wilderness neighborhood were suffering from his absence, and on the promise that, if allowed to return home, he would not assist in any way the cause of the Confederacy. This promise he assured me he had kept, but added that he was now under suspicion and was obliged so to act as not to lead the rebel soldiers to suspect that he was bringing comforts to the Federal wounded. That he came, therefore, only to bring things for the rebel wounded, but if I would take some milk or anything he could supply, and give it to the general, he would be happy.<sup>2</sup>

During the night Lee's troops were in motion, and on Sunday morning, May 8, the distant sound of cannon from the direction of Spotsylvania Court House signified the renewal of the struggle between him and Grant. Among the hospital tents the surgeons were still busy, and Adams, lying by Wadsworth's side, awaited the arrival of the faithful Virginian. When McCracken came with fresh milk, he and one of the surgeons made a vain effort to give nourishment to the dying man. By noon the end was plainly near, and the young North-

<sup>1</sup> See p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> Civil War Papers, Massachusetts Commandery of the Loyal Legion, II, 396.

ern physician, familiar with death as he was, watched, deeply moved, until the last breath was drawn.

McCracken, returning in the afternoon, asked permission to take the body and place it in his family burying-ground. He was allowed his way, and, having accomplished the task with all the care permitted by the means at his disposal, made it his next duty to write to Mrs. Wadsworth a simple account of his offices for the dead. Montgomery Ritchie went at once to Fredericksburg, whither, through the co-operation of Union and Confederate authorities under a flag of truce, the body was brought on May 17. From there it was taken to Geneseo, with due honors from the national<sup>1</sup> and the State governments, and finally it was laid to rest in the burying-ground on the hill.

The shock of loss woke the nation to the wealth of service that had been devoted to it by one man. Single deeds of Wadsworth's which it had accepted with matter-of-course praise were now seen to make up a consecrated whole. Grant,<sup>2</sup> Meade,<sup>3</sup> Humphreys,<sup>4</sup> and Hancock<sup>5</sup> testified in no equivocal terms to the example

<sup>1</sup> Wadsworth's commission as brevet major-general of volunteers, "for gallant conduct at the battles of Gettysburg and the Wilderness," dates the rank from May 6, 1864.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 248.

<sup>3</sup> "I mourned his death as that of a personal friend to whom I had become warmly attached. His loss to the public service is most serious. The moral effect of his example, his years and high social position, his distinguished personal gallantry and daring bravery, all tended to place him in a most conspicuous position, and to give him an influence over the soldiers which few other men possess."—(General Meade to Mrs. J. S. Wadsworth, July 2, 1864.)

<sup>4</sup> See p. 280.

<sup>5</sup> "One of the greatest losses the army has met with was in the death of General Wadsworth. His appearance, his earnestness, and his great gallantry made him a marked man in the army, and always produced a fine effect upon the troops. He behaved nobly on the morning of the 6th of May in the Wilderness. . . . On that day he exposed himself, individually, more than any soldier. Although not a soldier by education, his example was known to be so good that in the reorganization of the Army of the Potomac each corps commander desired to have him as commander of division."—(Letter of June 25, 1864. Printed in the *New York Evening Post*, September 29, 1864.)



and inspiration of his leadership; friends made in Washington and New York through participation in public affairs were no whit behind the army; the farmers of Geneseo, with whose lives his had been knit for more than half a century, knew that they had lost a friend whose career had been their welfare. But his distinctive service was what the Confederate officers who came to gaze in wonder at the dying man had grudgingly admitted, and what John Lothrop Motley proclaimed in his own ringing fashion: "When foreign calumniators and domestic traitors spoke of Southern chivalry and of Northern mercenaries, the single name of Wadsworth was answer enough to all their vulgar babble."<sup>1</sup> Lying dormant within the soul of a man whose life showed to the world as that of an earnest and friendly country gentleman, and whose years, if nothing else, might be deemed sufficient to exempt him from service in the field, dwelt forces that at the call of national danger were to make of him a soldier and a hero. To this end had been passed those many years of happy and wholesome activity in Geneseo; it was in truth their consummation when, amid the smoke-filled thickets of the Wilderness, his spirit fired by the desperateness of the need, he led his men in charge after charge. All this Wadsworth, by his heroic death, brought home to every heart. And, recognizing how rare and precious was the sacrifice thus laid upon the altar, the nation mingled gratitude with its grief and renewed its vow that such a life should not have been given in vain.

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Mrs. Wadsworth, June 26, 1864.





FORT WADSWORTH.  
At the entrance to New York Harbor.



## APPENDICES



## APPENDIX A

### GENEALOGY

WILLIAM WADSWORTH, from whom the Wadsworths of Connecticut and Geneseo trace their descent, was evidently a man of hardy, adventurous spirit, with force of character and ability to win and to hold the respect of his associates. It is possible that he was the William Wadsworth, aged twenty-six, who, in November, 1621, came in the Flying Harte to Daniel Gookin's ill-fated settlement in Virginia (Hotten's *Lists of Emigrants to America, 1600-1700*, p. 254). If that were the case he must have escaped the massacre in which, four months later, 349 of these settlers perished, and returned to England. This identification, however, there is not sufficient evidence to establish. But it is fairly well established<sup>1</sup> that the William Wadsworth who was one of the founders of Hartford was born in Longbuckby, Northamptonshire, about 1595 or 1600, that he married, moved to Braintree in Essex, and emigrated thence with his four children to this country.

The records show that on June 22, 1632, he was among the men about to leave England who took the oath of allegiance (Hotten, p. 150); beyond doubt he and his family were among the 123 passengers reaching Boston in the *Lion*, September 16, 1632 (*Mass. Hist. Coll., Fourth Series*, I, 94). He joined what was known as the Braintree Company and established himself in Cambridge, where, on November 6, 1632, he took the oath as a freeman (*N. E. Hist. Gen. Register*, 1849, III, 91); and in 1635 he was one of the first board of selectmen chosen in the town (Paige's *History of Cambridge*, p. 21).

From the time of his arrival William Wadsworth was one of the leading men in the group of emigrants who had come from Braintree and the surrounding towns. They were all devoted followers of the Reverend Thomas Hooker, of Chelmsford, eleven miles from Braintree, who in 1630 had been obliged to flee from his parish to Holland on account of his Puritan teachings. In 1632 Hooker was persuaded by them to come to Cambridge to be their minister, and

<sup>1</sup> From investigations made in 1738 and thereabout by Reverend Daniel Wadsworth, of Hartford, and Squire James Wadsworth, of Durham. Letters to them from relatives in Longbuckby and Northampton are in the possession of Major W. A. Wadsworth, of Geneseo, and of Charles A. Brinley, Esq., of Philadelphia.

in 1636 they followed his lead through the wilderness to found the settlement of Hartford on the Connecticut River. Here, in 1644, William Wadsworth married as his second wife Elizabeth Stone, sister of Reverend Samuel Stone, the associate and successor of Hooker. By her he had six children, one of whom was Captain Joseph Wadsworth of Charter Oak fame. Of William Wadsworth's position in Hartford Savage says that "he seems to have lived in the highest esteem; no man more often chosen representative, for between Oct., 1656, and May, 1675 (his last appearance), hardly a year misses his services."—(Gen. Dict. of N. E., IV, 381.)

The line of descent from William Wadsworth to James S. Wadsworth, of Geneseo, is shown by the table facing p. 293, which gives also the relation between this branch of the family and that of Jeremiah Wadsworth. The information drawn from *Two Hundred and Fifty Years of the Wadsworth Family in America* is corrected and supplemented by manuscript records in the possession of Major W. A. Wadsworth, of Geneseo.

## APPENDIX B

### JAMES WADSWORTH'S METHODS OF AGRICULTURE

*(Extracts from the article by Professor James Renwick in the "Monthly Journal of Agriculture" for October, 1846)*

THE estate of the Wadsworths, reserved in compliance with the principle originally adopted, that their capital should not be withdrawn from the region in which it was accumulated, was partly held in their own hands, partly leased, and partly cultivated "upon shares." The Home Farm, cultivated under their own immediate direction, comprises upward of two thousand acres, of which more than half is a rich alluvial *flat* of the Genesee River. This portion was for many years the only part from which any profit was derived; and to the raising and feeding of cattle, of which mention has already been made, was added the culture of hemp, for which crop the inexhaustible fertility of the soil was admirably adapted. The hilly land which borders the alluvial soil on the east was, in its original state, what is styled an "oak opening," namely, a swelling surface studded with gigantic black oak-trees and free from undergrowth. The latter had been kept down by the fires which the Indians were accustomed to light in it, for the purpose of rendering it a profitable hunting-ground. Where this custom is put a stop to, young trees and bushes speedily make their appearance, and unless cultivation of some description be applied the whole soon becomes a tangled thicket. This description of land was at first considered to be of little value. When, however, the state of the Spanish peninsula led to the importation of considerable flocks of Merino sheep, the Wadsworths were speedily among the largest proprietors of animals of that species, which were fed upon the uplands; and the high price which the fleeces long bore upon the seaboard sufficed to defray the cost of the tedious transportation to the navigable waters of the Hudson. Experience has shown that the oak openings, so much underrated at first, are better fitted for the growth of wheat than any other soils. But it is not surprising that this valuable property should have so tardily developed as to be considered by some a fortuitous discovery. It was not until the Erie Canal was opened that wheat would yield a return of the bare freight from the Genesee River to a market, and hence there was no inducement to cultivate more of that grain than could be consumed on the spot. In spite, however,



of the admirable adaptation of the upland of the Home Farm to the production of wheat, grazing was to the very last the principal object. This application to a purpose which might at first sight appear the least profitable was dictated by the prudence of Mr. Wadsworth, who was aware that it was impossible by means of hired labor to cultivate grain on as good terms as could be done by those who held their own ploughs. For similar reasons root crops never formed a part of his system of husbandry.

The leasehold lands were at first granted to the settlers for the term of two joint lives and the survivor, the parties named being usually the settler and his wife. By mutual agreement these were subsequently changed to leases for a term of years, and this became, from that time, the form of the original contract. These farms usually comprised each about one hundred acres. The rent was in most cases fixed by a money standard, but it was many years before money began to pass from the tenant to the landlord. The convenience of the former demanded that it should be received in the product of the farm or worked out in labor. . . .

Larger farms than those of one hundred acres were leased for shorter terms, on the conditions of the payment of a share, usually one-third, of the grain crops, and a stipulated sum for the portions not under the plough. The rotation of the crops on property of this description, and the manner of cultivation, required much individual attention from the proprietor, and, although more profitable to him than lands leased in the other manner, were far more troublesome to manage.

In the collection of his rents, Mr. Wadsworth looked for the same punctuality and good faith from his tenants that he was accustomed to exhibit in his own dealings with others. Hence, with the improvident or careless he gained the reputation of severity. That this was unmerited, none acquainted with his active benevolence and equanimity of temper can doubt. The knowledge on the part of his tenants of the steadiness of his course in this respect was, to the industrious, rather a benefit than an injury, for it compelled them to a close calculation of their profits; and the requirement of punctuality in payment prevented the careless from accumulating debts beyond their ability to discharge.

Many of the farms held for long terms of years reverted to Mr. Wadsworth before his death; and, while the land itself was generally in good order, the tenants had, for the most part, made such profit from the occupation as to be in comfortable circumstances. From inquiries and comparisons made upon the spot it was inferred that the tenants of his estate were upon the whole more successful in their pursuits, enjoyed a greater share of comfort, and laid by larger profits than those who purchased upon credit lands of equal quality in the neighborhood.—(Pages 150, 151.)

We have already spoken in part of the manner in which his home

farm was conducted. Devoting it chiefly to grazing, the sources from which his stock was derived varied with the progress of settlement. Drawn at first from New England, the supplies of young neat-cattle were finally obtained from Ohio and States still farther West. This, of course, did not preclude the breeding of stock upon his own farm; and here he manifested a sense of practical utility by which it would have been well had others, who have devoted large sums to the obtaining of foreign breeds, been influenced. The breed of his native valley of the Connecticut was that which he preferred, and upon his rich pastures it has attained an excellence which may be envied by those who have resorted to foreign races. It so happens that the stock of the earlier settlers of New England was, from the fact of all the vessels taking their final departure from the southwestern ports of the mother country, derived from the very county, Devonshire, where the best of the improved breeds of England have their origin. This has been thoroughly acclimatized, and although it may have degenerated in barren soils, and for want of care, the valley of the Connecticut still possesses it, rather improved than fallen from its original good qualities.

His attention to fine-wooled sheep was governed by similar practical and judicious views. He had no share in the mania under the influence of which Merino rams were sought for at the price of thousands of dollars; but no sooner did the price fall to reasonable limits than he became the possessor of the largest flock in the State; and he did not condemn it to the butcher when the unreasonable expectation of sudden and enormous profits, which others entertained, were proved to be fallacious.—(Page 155.)

## APPENDIX C

### THE WADSWORTH ESTATE IN 1850

*(From Notes on North America, by Professor James F. W. Johnston, 1851)*

THIS gentleman [James S. Wadsworth] himself farms 1,000 acres, and clears from 3 to 7½ per cent on the whole capital employed, including the market value of the land and of the buildings and stock upon it. For a gentleman farmer this would be a very fair return; but it is scarcely enough in a country where land gives no political and little social influence, and where, by lending his money and doing nothing, a man can obtain 7 per cent certain.

Mr. Wadsworth informed me that the system of renting farms is not unpopular in his district; that his farms used to be let nominally on shares but in reality at a fixed grain rent. The produce was estimated at 18 bushels of wheat an acre, and he took one-third, or 6 bushels, as the rent. Latterly he has been taking 8 bushels, and the farmers pay it readily. The rotation he prescribes is wheat followed by two years clover, cut for hay or eaten off the first year, and eaten off or ploughed in the second. For the wheat land he takes 6 or 8 bushels of grain of the best quality, delivered in kind at a warehouse on the canal, where it is always sure of an immediate and ready market; for the clover land he takes a money-rent of two or three dollars an acre, as may be fixed by inspection of an agent, every year. . . .

On the whole, under this system of management Mr. Wadsworth calculates that his land yields him five per cent upon its market value in the form of rent, besides which he has the benefit of the continual rise in the value of land, which has added enormously to the value of this property since it came into the hands of his family. But this return is scarcely advantageous enough to present an inducement to moneyed men of the Old World to invest their capital in the purchase of large tracts of land in the New. The possession of this land carries with it little increased consideration and confers no political influence. On the contrary, in most places it is a cause of jealousy, distrust, and dislike. The feeling is that the living man, and not the dead chattels that he owns, ought to influence the destinies of the country.—(I, 206, 207.)

## APPENDIX D

### SPEECH OF JAMES S. WADSWORTH AS CHAIRMAN OF THE DEMOCRATIC-REPUBLICAN CONVENTION AT SYRACUSE, JULY 24, 1856

*(From the Proceedings of the Convention)*

I THANK you, gentlemen of the convention, for the distinguished honor which you have conferred upon me. The occasion which has brought us together is one of deep and abiding interest to us and to those whom we represent. If the result of our deliberations should separate us from some of the political associates with whom we have passed the best years of our lives, we cannot weigh too cautiously every step we take. But, gentlemen, if in the pursuit of wisdom to direct our course, we go back to the early days of the republic—to the infancy of the great Republican party—to the days of Jefferson (a man, let me add, whose memory is not less dear to our hearts because, if he were living to-day, he would be driven an exile from his native State, and would not be allowed to emigrate to the vast domain which he secured for his country west of the Mississippi)—if we go back to those times and drink deep at the fountains of freedom it will be our own gross error if we go far astray.

Or, coming down to a later period—to the times of Silas Wright, of Michael Hoffman, of Samuel Young, men who have gone from among us but were yet of our own time, with whom we have fought side by side, who never betrayed us, and whom we never deserted—if we adopt the principles we have so often heard so earnestly expressed from their own lips, if we stand where they stood, we need have no fears for the result. Those men were Democrats because they believed in democracy and not because it was the name of a platform placed under them or over them. They did not look to Washington for advice or to Cincinnati for principles. They gathered wisdom from the honest and sure instincts of the popular mind and strength from the popular will. If we follow in their footsteps we may safely abide the verdict of November.

I had the honor, gentlemen, to be a delegate to the Democratic convention which met in this city prior to the election of 1848. We laid down then and there, as one of the foundation stones of the Democracy of New York, opposition to the extension of slavery. I see around me many of the men who were with me delegates to the

Baltimore convention of that year. I claim that we proved ourselves worthy of the great trust reposed in us by the radical Democracy of New York when we came out of that convention rather than see the principle of our constituents trampled in the dust. We came home and appealed to those who had sent us there. We were sustained by one hundred thousand of the Democratic electors of New York. A few men have since been seduced from us by the allurements of office and the flatteries of power; but if we stand where we stood then, on the same eternal principles, I firmly believe that we shall find the people where we found them then. For one I shall impatiently but confidently await the great verdict of the country upon the stand I trust we shall take here to-day.

I shall not, gentlemen, further detain you, except to ask your friendly aid and, if need be, your forbearance in the discharge of the duties you have imposed upon me.

## APPENDIX E

### TROOPS LEFT BY McCLELLAN FOR THE DEFENCE OF WASHINGTON

NATURALLY, Wadsworth's statements in his letter to Stanton of April 2 were attacked by McClellan, but the evidence submitted in his report (W. R., V, 60-64) is, except in the case of the light artillery, rather general. The facts with regard to the troops mentioned in his list on page 22 of W. R., V, as nearly as they can now be ascertained, are as follows:

1. *Infantry*.—The only deduction to be made from McClellan's list, which is substantially accurate, is the Fifty-fourth Pennsylvania, which was joined to Colonel Miles's "railroad brigade" in Maryland. The Ninety-first New York is an error for the One Hundred and Second New York. The Twenty-sixth Pennsylvania and the Twelfth Virginia consisted of one company each; the Thirty-seventh New York of two companies.

2. *Cavalry*.—Of the four regiments of dismounted cavalry mentioned by McClellan as being "near Washington" two were at Perryville, Maryland, at the mouth of the Susquehanna, where they remained, one till May 11, one till August; the third did not leave New York till May 5; the fourth began to leave Pennsylvania on April 2 and, after assembling at Baltimore, reached Washington on April 25.

3. *Heavy Artillery*.—Second New York Heavy Artillery is given by McClellan as "Light"; Third Battalion of New York Heavy is omitted.

4. *Light Artillery*.—It is here that McClellan's reply to Wadsworth's statements is explicit. He gives (W. R., V, 61) a letter from General W. F. Barry, his chief of artillery, which contains a list showing that six batteries, thirty-two guns in all, and the Sixteenth New York Battery, which having just arrived was unequipped with either guns or horses, were left for the defence of Washington. Before the McDowell court of inquiry General Barry testified that of the six batteries three were "fully equipped and fit for service" and three had an insufficient number of horses.—(W. R., XII, pt. 1, pp. 239, 240.) Of the first three, however, one (Battery A, Second Battalion, New York Artillery) was presently attached to Richardson's division of the Army of the Potomac; another (Battery B, Second Battalion, New York Artillery) to Williams's division of

Banks's army, and then to Doubleday's brigade, Army of the Rappahannock (W. R., XII, pt. 3, p. 311, return of May 31); the third (Battery L, Second New York Artillery) was stripped of over sixty-nine of its one hundred and ten horses to fit out batteries that were to take the field, and was then left behind.—(See The Flushing Battery, pp. 23, 24; and also Barry's testimony.) As to the ease of supplying new horses, concerning which General Barry was so confident, the battery which had been stripped acquired with difficulty a poor supply that were broken to harness and accustomed to drill only after much labor. As a matter of fact, none of the batteries imperfectly equipped was able to respond to the false alarm of April 19.

Finally, General Barry admitted in his testimony that the list of seven batteries was not obtained from personal knowledge, but was sent to him after he had left for the peninsula by the commander of the field artillery in Washington, who still considered himself as belonging to the Army of the Potomac. Thus General Barry's letter, which is the only piece of specific testimony presented by McClellan, is valueless.—(On this whole subject, see the records of the various organizations as given in State and regimental histories, and in Dyer's Compendium of the Rebellion; the testimony before the Committee on the Conduct of the War given by General Wadsworth, pt. 1, pp. 251–253, by General Hitchcock, pp. 303–305; the testimony given before the McDowell court of inquiry by General Wadsworth, W. R., XII, pt. 1, pp. 112–115, by General Hitchcock, pp. 218–221, by General Barry, pp. 239–241; McClellan's report, W. R., V, 60–64.)

Unfortunately, no light is thrown on this part of the subject by the monthly return of March 31, 1862, which General Wadsworth summarized in the subjoined letter. In that return the statement of the number of guns of heavy, field, and mountain artillery is puzzlingly incomplete; in the column marked "horses" there is only one entry for all arms; one horse, "unserviceable," in the Eighty-eighth Pennsylvania. I have emended Wadsworth's summary to remedy errors in copying, and have added explanations to help in a more complete identification of the commands; I have not been able, however, to make Wadsworth's and Barry's lists of light artillery agree.

The letter in question was printed in the *New York Times* of May 19, 1863, and was the second and more important of the two letters in which Wadsworth replied to attacks made on him in the *New York World*. The letter is as follows:

*To the Editor of the New York Times :*

I regret to have to trouble you again to correct the misapprehension that seems to exist as to the troops assigned to the defence of Washington in March and April, 1862. The enclosed article, from the *New York World*, impeaching my veracity, reached me the



day before I left my command, on a short leave of absence, and as I passed through Washington I procured copies of the monthly returns of the troops under my command at that time. The following is a condensed statement of the return for the 31st March, 1862, showing the troops in and about Washington under my command:

First New Jersey Cavalry . . . . .	783
Fifth United States Cavalry (part of a company) . . . .	32
Fourth Pennsylvania Cavalry . . . . .	404

## ARTILLERY

Battery C & K, First New York (light); two batteries Rocket Battalion [Batteries A and B, Second Battalion New York Artillery, light]; Battery L, Second New York Artillery [light] . . . . .	788
Second Battalion [regiment] New York Artillery [heavy, not including Battery L] . . . . .	932
Third Battalion New York Artillery [heavy] . . . . .	352
Fourth New York Artillery [heavy] . . . . .	552
Eleventh and Twelfth Batteries New York Artillery [light] .	259
Dickinson Light Artillery [Sixteenth New York Battery] . .	143
One Hundred and Twelfth Pennsylvania Volunteer Artillery [heavy] . . . . .	804
Fourteenth Massachusetts Volunteer Artillery [heavy] . .	1,326
First Wisconsin Artillery [heavy] . . . . .	70
Total . . . . .	5,226

## INFANTRY

Twenty-sixth, Thirty-first [error for Thirty-seventh, two companies, including detachment of Fourth United States Artillery serving as infantry], Fifty-ninth, Seventy-sixth, Eighty-sixth, Ninety-fourth, Ninety-fifth, Ninety-ninth [error for Ninety-seventh], One Hundred and First, One Hundred and Second, One Hundred and Fourth New York Volunteers; Tenth New Jersey Volunteers; Twenty-sixth [one company], Fifty-sixth, Eighty-eighth, Ninety-first, Ninety-ninth, One Hundred and Seventh Pennsylvania Volunteers; Twelfth Virginia Volunteers (one company); Second District Columbia Volunteers.—Aggregate Infantry, 13,146.

Total of all arms present for duty, 19,591 [enlisted men only; including officers, 20,769].

As to a portion of the cavalry and artillery above enumerated, I was not at the time sure that it was intended for my command, and some of it was ordered away in a few days; but I embrace it in this statement, as it was within my command at that time. In my return to the Secretary of War, on the 2d April, I stated the number at 19,025. At the end of April the returns show a force of 19,475. I had not time to examine the daily returns. They, of course, fluctu-

ated. It was not the numerical strength of my command that I complained of—many of the regiments were new—some of them had just reached Washington and received their arms. Others had elements of weakness and disorganization within themselves which it is impossible to refer to here—such as incompetent officers, officers under arrest, etc. As I stated in my former communication to you, Senator Chandler's language, that I had "no guns on wheels," was incorrect—I had no artillery mounted and available for service.

From this force, I was ordered by General McClellan to detail four regiments, good ones, two to Richardson's division, one to Heintzelman's old division, and one to Hooker's division. I was further ordered by him to send four thousand men to Manassas and Warrenton. It had been previously understood that Banks was to occupy that point. The First Connecticut Heavy Artillery, garrisoning the forts in front of and above Alexandria, and the Third New York Artillery (heavy) garrisoning the forts opposite Georgetown, had just been detached from my command. The Fourteenth Massachusetts Artillery was not assigned to me to replace any of these regiments, as it was previously under my command, but it was ordered by me to garrison part of the works evacuated by the First Connecticut. The Ninety-seventh New York, a new regiment, was ordered to Fort Corcoran and to the works opposite Georgetown. General Banks was, at the date of my report, in the Valley of the Shenandoah, and the duty assigned to him was to occupy it and to guard the approach through it to the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. Two ranges of mountains were between him and Washington, although one light brigade of his (Abercrombie's) was, I believe, on this side of the Bull Run Mountains; two or three regiments of this command came to Washington very soon after to be discharged, being twelve months' volunteers from Indiana. General Dix had a small force at Baltimore, two light regiments guarding the railroad thence to Washington, and one at Annapolis, guarding the depot there. With these exceptions all the troops south of Baltimore were under my command, and embraced in my statement, which shows, so far as I know, all the troops in or about Washington assigned to or available for its defence. What troops General McClellan referred to in his statement before the McDowell court of inquiry, as assigned to defend Washington, other than those above referred to, I have no means of knowing, or even conjecturing. Your obedient servant,

JAS. S. WADSWORTH, *Brigadier-General.*

## APPENDIX F

### SPEECH OF GENERAL WADSWORTH AT WASHINGTON, FRIDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 26, 1862

I THANK you, gentlemen, for the honor you do me in making this visit. I suppose I may assume that you come to congratulate me upon having received from the Convention of the State of New York—a Convention composed of the truest friends of the country and the most earnest supporters of the war—on having received from that Convention the nomination to the distinguished position of Governor of the State of New York. While I cannot allow myself to overestimate the compliment of this nomination, while I cannot allow myself to misunderstand it or to receive it in any considerable degree as a personal compliment, I need not say how highly I appreciate it. I have not earned it, gentlemen, by any public service of my own in my own native State. I have never held any public position or any official position there. I am known only as a citizen who has pursued his avocations during most of his life entirely in the privacy of home.

But the gentlemen who have brought forward my name have done so largely on trust. While I cannot claim that this nomination is the result of any services which I have rendered, or is a reward for any merit in me, I do claim for it significance and meaning plainly marked. I have been brought forward, gentlemen, by men who are in earnest, and they brought me forward because they believed that I was in earnest. (Cries of "Good!" and cheers.) These men believe that this rebellion can be crushed, and they intend that it shall be crushed. (Applause.) They intend to uphold this noble Republican Government of ours. They intend to hold together this country, hold it together at whatever cost of life, of blood, of suffering, of treasure. At whatever cost, they intend to hold it together—to make it desolate, devastated, if need be,<sup>1</sup> but to hold it together, one country, and that a free country—"Good," and cheers)—a land of refuge, as it has been in days past, for the oppressed from all parts of the world.

<sup>1</sup> "General Wadsworth's speech seems to us shocking when he speaks of choosing devastation and extermination to division."—(Duchess of Argyll to Charles Sumner, October 20, 1862. Pierce-Sumner papers, Harvard College Library.)

They have brought me forward, gentlemen, as their standard-bearer, because I believe what they believe, I think what they think, I feel as they feel, on these great questions. They do not wish, they do not intend, to survive the dismemberment of their country, and they do not believe that I wish to survive it, or that my children should survive it. (Cheers.) These are the thoughts which have influenced them in bringing me forward, and I trust that in that light, however poor may be my claim in other respects, I shall receive the approbation and support of the sons of New York who may be here. (Cries, "You will.")

I do not propose, gentlemen, on this occasion—it would be obviously improper in me, in the position which I now occupy—to enter at large into a discussion of the conduct of the war, or the policy of the Government. Sufficient for us to know, gentlemen, that the Government has given us the most solemn and repeated assurances—and it is sustained by the public sentiment of the loyal people who gather to its support—that the war will be prosecuted with the utmost military energy, and that all the means, agencies, and appliances of honorable war will be availed of to carry it on and bring this struggle to an end.

It would have been criminal folly in the Government to have overlooked one great element of Southern society—an element which may be, and will be, according as we use it—an element of weakness or an element of strength. It would have been criminal folly in the Government to have overlooked or forgotten the fact that we are fighting against an aristocracy, base and selfish, and still a powerful aristocracy; and it would have been worse than folly to suppose that they could put down the rebellion and save the aristocracy. A year and a half of bitter experience has proved to us that we cannot do that—that we shall fail if we attempt such a thing, and fail ignobly.

We have moistened a hundred battle-fields with the blood of our sons. We are surrounded with hospitals, with the sick and suffering, with wounded and dying men. Almost every household in the North is filled with gloom and weeping for some beloved member, who has gone forth to return no more; and what have we gained? Is it enough that we are safe on this side of the Potomac? Are we repaid for all our sacrifices by this consolation? I think not. And yet, gentlemen, what has this powerful aristocracy done for us that it is entitled to our sympathy? What has it done with this Government, but use it for its own aggrandizement, and failing in that, rise up to overthrow it?

I have never failed, gentlemen, previous to the outbreak of this rebellion, on any public and proper occasion, to declare my earnest devotion to the Constitution of the United States, and my desire to uphold it, with what are called its compromises and concessions in behalf of Slavery. But, gentlemen, Secession and War, bloody and

relentless war, have changed our relations to that which is the cause and the source of the war. (Applause, and cries of "That's it.") We have the right, we are bound moreover, by the most solemn obligations of duty, to use this agency, so far as we can, to put an end to this struggle, and to save the lives of white men who are perishing by thousands in this country.

How long are we to bear the insolence of this Southern aristocracy? Have we not borne it long enough? Has it not long enough disturbed and distracted our councils, and paralyzed our energies? Has it not long enough paralyzed the energies of the country? Nay, more, has it not long enough, in the eyes of the other civilized nations of the world, covered us with infamy? (A voice—"It has even so.") But, be that as it may, the issue is made up, and we must conquer or be conquered by it. This struggle is already far advanced—it is near its end. We are in the pangs of dissolution, or we are in the pangs of exorcism. If we would save ourselves, we must cast out the devil which has tormented and disgraced us from the hour of our national birth. ("Good, good.")

We want peace, but more than we want peace, we want a country. We want peace, but we want an honorable peace, a permanent peace, a solid peace. When we have achieved that, we shall commence on a career of prosperity such as we have never known, and such as the world has never before witnessed. We shall spring up, at one bound, to be the mightiest and the happiest people on the face of the earth. (Cheers.) I thank you, gentlemen, for the patience with which you have listened to me. (Prolonged, enthusiastic cheering.)

## APPENDIX G

### GENERAL WADSWORTH'S LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE OF HIS NOMINATION AS CANDIDATE FOR GOVERNOR BY THE REPUBLICAN-UNION CONVENTION

WASHINGTON, *October 2, 1862.*

HON. HENRY J. RAYMOND, *President, etc.:*

*Dear Sir:*—I have the pleasure to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of September 29, informing me that the Convention held at Syracuse on the 24th of that month, composed of men resolved to maintain the integrity of the Union, irrespective of their previous party associations, had done me the honor of placing my name before the electors of the State of New York for the office of Governor.

I respectfully accept the nomination.

I cordially agree with the Convention in the sentiments expressed in their resolutions, and, if elected, I shall zealously labor to carry out their wishes as therein defined.

I might, perhaps with propriety, stop here, but as the duties of my present position will not allow me to return to New York for some time, and possibly not until after the election has been held, I ask your indulgence while I express briefly my views as to the questions involved in the canvass.

I think I cannot be mistaken in assuming that the election will turn upon the necessity of sustaining our National Government in its efforts to uphold itself, and maintain its territorial integrity, and especially upon the Proclamation of the President, issued to that end, and referred to in the fourth resolution of the Convention.

I entirely approve of that Proclamation and commend it to the support of the electors of New York, for the following reasons:—

1. It is an effectual aid to the speedy and complete suppression of the rebellion.

Six or eight millions of whites, having had time to organize their government, and arm their troops, fed and supported by four millions of slaves, presents the most formidable rebellion recorded in history.

Strike from this rebellion the support which it derives from the unrequited toil of these slaves, and its foundation will be undermined.

2. It is the most humane method of putting down the rebellion, the history of which has clearly proved that the fears of slave insur-



reactions and massacres are entirely unfounded.—While the slaves earnestly desire freedom, they have shown no disposition to injure their masters. They will cease to work for them without wages, but they will form, throughout the Southern States, the most peaceful and docile peasantry on the face of the earth.

The Slaveowners once compelled to labor for their own support, the war must cease, and its appalling carnage come to an end.

3. The emancipation once effected, the Northern States would be forever relieved, as it is right they should be, from the fears of a great influx of African laborers, disturbing the relations of those Northern industrial classes who have so freely given their lives to the support of the Government.

This done, and the whole African population will drift to the South, where it will find a congenial climate, and vast tracts of land never yet cultivated.

I forbear to enter into the discussion of the great increase of trade to the Northern States and the whole commercial world, which would result from the wants of four millions of free paid laborers, over the same number held as heretofore in Slavery.

I forbear also to enter into the question of the ultimate vast increase in the production of the great Southern staples. This is not a time to consider questions of profit. It will long be remembered, to the great honor of the merchants, bankers, and manufacturers of the North, that, giving the lie to the calumnies of slave-breeding aristocrats, who charge them with being degraded and controlled by the petty profits of traffic, they have met the sacrifices of this great struggle with a cheerfulness and promptness of which history furnishes no parallel.

Nor is the question now before us one of philanthropy alone, sacred as are the principles therein involved; nor is it a question of abstract ideas, involving an unprofitable discussion of the equality of races. It is simply a question of war, of National life or death, and of the mode in which we can most surely and effectually uphold our Government and maintain its unity and supremacy.

Our foreign enemies, for it is not to be disguised that we have such, reproach us with waging a territorial war. So we do, but that territory is *our country*. For maintaining its greatness and power among the nations of the earth, by holding it together, they hate us. We can bear that; but if we were to yield to their suggestions, and submit to its dismemberment, they would forever despise us.

This great domain, from the Lakes to the Gulf, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, one country; governed by one idea—freedom—is yet destined to dictate terms, if need be, to the world in arms, and I hold that man to be a traitor and a coward, who, under any defeats, any pressure of adversity however great, any calamities however dire, would give up one acre of it.

It is more than a year since I left our State. Great changes



have taken place within that period. Costly victories and disastrous defeats have, in the vicissitudes of war, befallen our arms. Bereavements and destitution have overtaken families.

I can only judge of the spirit of my fellow-citizens of New York, by that of her gallant sons who have rushed to the field. These I have seen in great numbers, and particularly those who have been in the hospitals within my command.

Among these brave men, feeble and exhausted by disease, tortured and mutilated by cruel wounds, I have never yet heard the first word of despair, the first sigh of regret, that they had given health and life to their country.

If we may judge of the spirit of those they have left at home, and who may yet be called to the field, by the heroic temper of these men, we have nothing to fear as to the result.

In the solemn verdict of the ballot, and the deadly conflict of battle, this Government of the people will be sustained.

I beg that you will accept for yourself, and convey to the members of the Convention over which you presided, my sincere thanks for the great honor which they did me in placing my name before the electors of New York, for a position so responsible and distinguished as that of Governor of the State.

I am, Sir, with great respect, truly yours,

JAMES S. WADSWORTH.

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## INDEX

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## A PARTIAL TA

1st generation

2d generation

3d generation

<p>1696</p> <p>DEACON JOHN WADSWORTH, = ELIZABETH STANLEY,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">of Farmington,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">1662-1718.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Seven children.</p>	<p>daughter of</p> <p>John Stanley, of —</p> <p>Died 1713.</p>
---	--

4th generation

<p>1733-4</p> <p>REVEREND DANIEL WADSWORTH, = ABIGAIL TALCOTT,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">of Hartford. Yale, 1726.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">1704-1747.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Six children.</p>	<p>of Hartford,</p> <p>daughter of</p> <p>Governor Talcott,</p> <p>1707-1773.</p>
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5th generation

<p>1764</p> <p>COLONEL JEREMIAH WADSWORTH, = MEHITABEL RUSSELL,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">of Hartford,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">1743-1804.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Three children.</p>	<p>of Middletown,</p> <p>1734-1817.</p>
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6th generation

<p>1794</p> <p>DANIEL WADSWORTH, = FAITH TRUMBULL,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">of Hartford,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">1771-1848.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">No children.</p>	<p>daughter of</p> <p>second Governor Trumbull.</p> <p>1769-1846</p>
--	--

7th generation





# A PARTIAL TABLE OF THE DESCENDANTS OF WILLIAM WADSWORTH, OF HARTFORD

1st generation

1624(?)  
 (first wife) = WILLIAM WADSWORTH, 1644  
 of Hartford, = ELIZABETH STONE,  
 1595(?)–1675. of Hartford,  
 16—(?)–1682.  
 Four children. Ten children. Six children.

2d generation

1656(?)  
 JOHN WADSWORTH, = SARAH STANLEY,  
 of Farmington, of Hartford.  
 1625(?)–1689. Died 1718.  
 Nine children.

APTAIN JOSEPH WADSWORTH,  
 of Hartford,  
 1648(?)–1730(?).

3d generation

1696  
 DEACON JOHN WADSWORTH, = ELIZABETH STANLEY,  
 of Farmington, daughter of  
 1662–1718. John Stanley, of —  
 Seven children. Died 1713.

1699(?)  
 COLONEL JAMES WADSWORTH, = RUTH NILES,  
 of Durham, of Lyme,  
 1677–1756. 1678–177  
 One child.

4th generation

1733–4  
 REVEREND DANIEL WADSWORTH, = ABIGAIL TALCOTT,  
 of Hartford. Yale, 1726. of Hartford,  
 1704–1747. daughter of  
 Six children. Governor Talcott,  
 1707–1773.

1728(?)  
 SQUIRE JAMES WADSWORTH, = ABIGAIL DENFIELD,  
 of Durham, of Gt. B.,  
 1700(?)–1777. 1702–748.  
 Three children.

5th generation

1764  
 COLONEL JEREMIAH WADSWORTH, = MEHITABEL RUSSELL,  
 of Hartford, of Middletown,  
 1743–1804. 1734–1817.  
 Three children.

1755(?)  
 GENERAL JAMES WADSWORTH, = CATHARINE GUERNSEY,  
 of Durham. Yale, 1748. 1732–1813.  
 1730–1817.  
 Two children died in infancy.

1757  
 JOHN NOYES WADSWORTH, = ESTHER PARSONS,  
 of Durham, of Durham,  
 1732–1787. 1732–1799.  
 Three children.

6th generation

1794  
 DANIEL WADSWORTH, = FAITH TRUMBULL,  
 of Hartford, daughter of  
 1771–1848. second Governor Trumbull.  
 No children. 1769–1846

JOHN NOYES WADSWORTH,  
 of Durham,  
 1758–1814.

WILLIAM WADSWORTH,  
 of Geneseo,  
 1761–1833.

JAMES WADSWORTH, = NAOMI WOLCOTT,  
 of Geneseo, of East Windsor,  
 1768–1844. 1777–1831.  
 Five children.

7th generation

1834  
 JAMES SAMUEL WADSWORTH, = MARY CRAIG WHARTON,  
 of Geneseo, of Philadelphia,  
 1807–1864. 1812–1874.  
 Six children.

# HARTFORD

CAPTAIN JOSEPH WADSWORTH,  
of Hartford,  
1648(?)—1730(?).

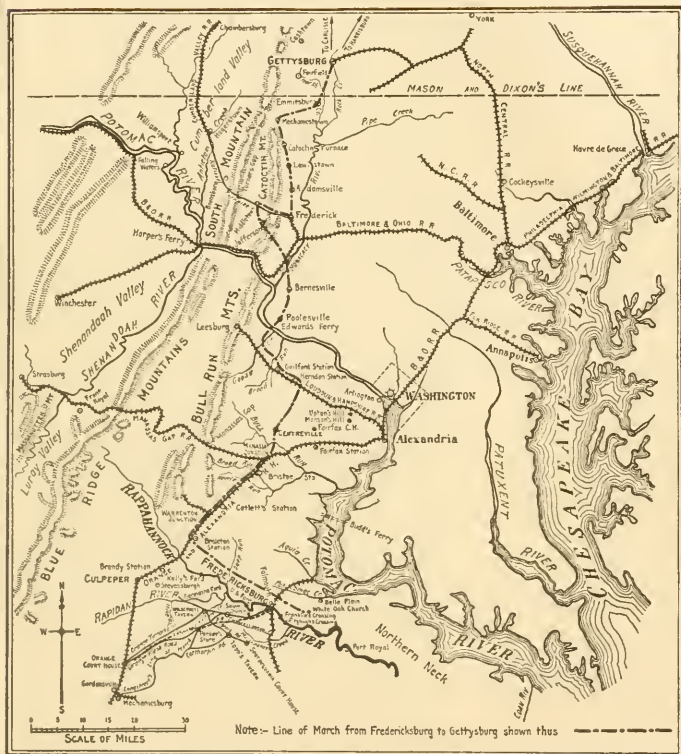
S,  
4.

ENFIELD,  
Hartford,  
1748.

1757  
VES WADSWORTH, = ESTHER PARSONS,  
of Durham, of Durham.  
1732-1799.  
Five children.

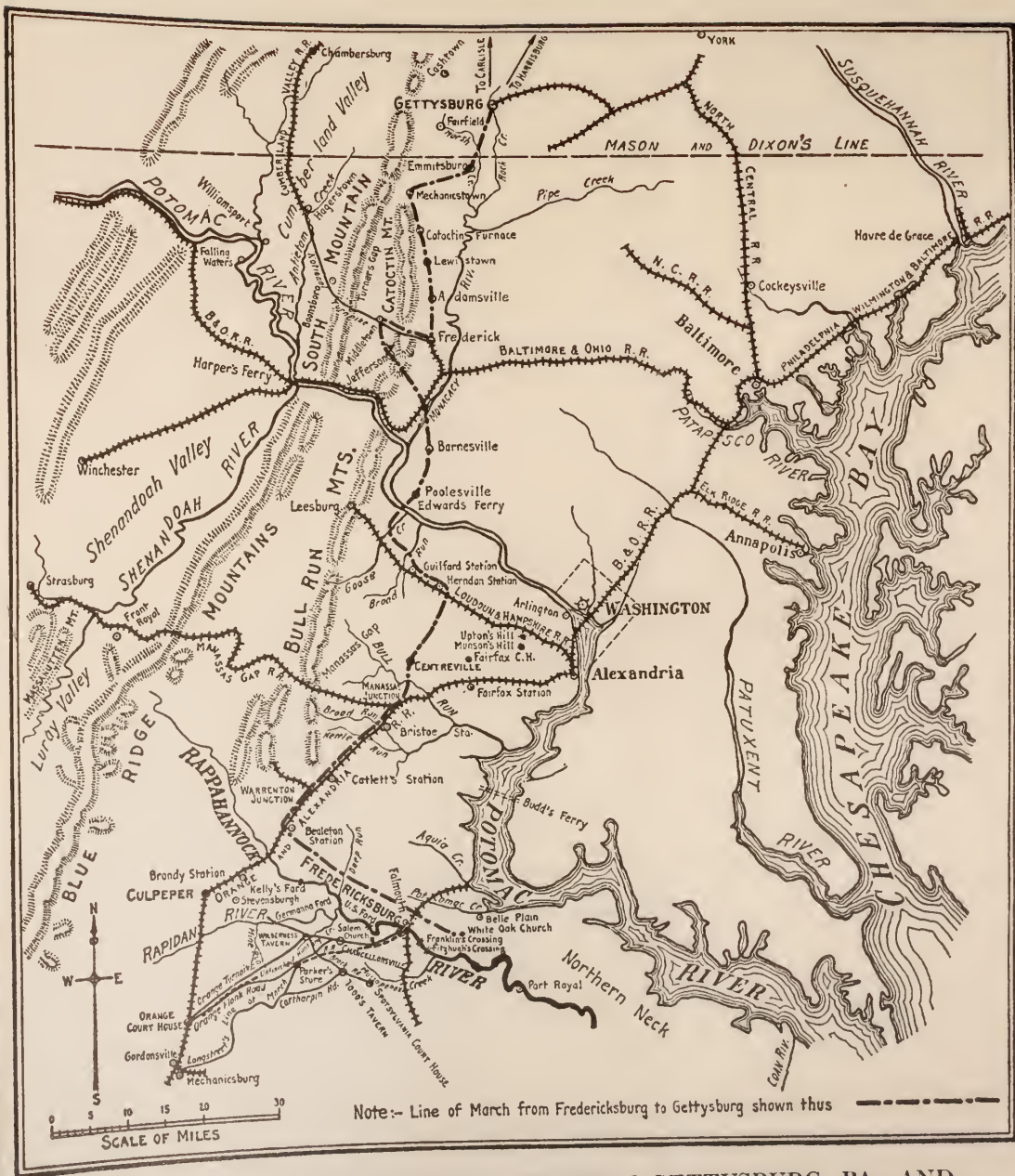
1804  
WORTH, JAMES WADSWORTH, = NAOMI WOLCOTT,  
of Geneseo, of East Windsor,  
1768-1844. 1777-1831.  
Five children.

1834  
JAMES SAMUEL WADSWORTH, = MARY CRAIG WHARTON,  
of Geneseo, of Philadelphia,  
1807-1864. 1812-1874.  
Six children.



GENERAL MAP OF THE REGION BETWEEN GETTYSBURG, PA., AND  
FREDERICKSBURG, VA.





GENERAL MAP OF THE REGION BETWEEN GETTYSBURG, PA., AND  
FREDERICKSBURG, VA.



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